

NOVI SPORTS

Novi High's success due to dedication

By GEORGE SIPPLE
FREE PRESS SPORTS WRITER

Nearly half of Novi High's 1,600 students are involved in athletics, either at the varsity, junior varsity or freshman level, according to boys cross-country and track coach Robert Smith.

"I don't think I'm exaggerating" Smith said. "We recruit hard on the kids that aren't doing anything."

With a larger number

of students to choose from, the odds of fielding competitive teams increases and the majority of Novi's varsity teams enjoy some degree of success.

In the past four years, Novi teams have won 26 Kensington Valley Conference championships, 16 district titles, six regional championships and six state championships.

The Novi boys cross-country team captured its second straight Division 1

state title in the 1999-2000 school year, and wrestlers Dan Jilg, a senior who'll wrestle at Michigan State, and Ryan Churella, a junior, won individual Division 1 state wrestling titles at 119 and 130 pounds, respectively.

The wrestling team finished runner-up to Davison in Division 1. The girls soccer team advanced to the Division 2 semifinals. The baseball team advanced to the Di-

vision I quarterfinals.

The boys soccer and softball teams advanced to regionals, the football team qualified for the playoffs and the gymnastics team — which includes students from Northville — finished fourth in the state meet.

"There's really not a bad team in the lot," Smith said. "I'd like to think we're going to offer the best possible program to a family, no matter what the sport."

Novi goes for third title in row

Top teams and individuals

A look at some of the top Metro Detroit boys cross-country teams and individuals, coached by The News' Bev Eckman. Teams and runners are listed in alphabetical order.

TEAMS

Detroit Catholic Central: Finished sixth in Class A. Returns top runner Matt Daly, a senior, eighth at the Michigan High School Athletic Association championship meet in 1943. Comeback competitor is senior John DiGiovanni — 90th in 16:36.70 — injured last season after making All-State as a sophomore. Senior Doug Gibbons was 24th in the state in 16:16.90. Junior Ryan Lowry moves up from junior varsity. Adding depth are the Krawiec brothers, Dan, a senior (No. 85 in 17:07.30), and John, a junior, also up from JV. "Most of our top runners this year are seniors," Coach Tony Magni said. "We should be competitive."

Detroit Holy Redeemer: Finished sixth in Class D. Won the Catholic C-D and its regional. Coach Pat Irwin said his team is in a rebuilding year, and that with the MHSAA restructuring, Division 4 will be tougher than Class D. Top runner from last season, junior Ray Perez, (seventh in 17:20), suffered an injured right knee during the summer but could heal in time to help. Junior Danny Sandoval was out most of last season because of shin splints, finishing 79th at states in 18:58.50. "He's much, much better. I expect him to surprise a lot of people," Irwin said. Roberto Benitez, 80th in 19:01, should improve.

Highland Millford: Finished seventh at the state meet, third in the Kensington Valley Conference and Oakland County meets. Lost Tom Greenless, who will run for Michigan. Coach Brian Salyers has four of his top seven back — senior Dan Hurst (No. 195 in 17:09), juniors Nick Kopyzyk (80th, 16:46.20), Casey Barnes (No. 202, 17:33.9) and Tyler VanAcker (No. 215, 17:39.0). "They are a youthful yet experienced bunch that will rely on pack running to be competitive in the KVC and regionals," Salyers said.

Lake Orion: Ninth at states, won its regional, was second in the Oakland Activities Association. Should be in the top 10, could be the dark horse and finish higher. Coach Stan Ford's team returns four of seven — seniors Chris Mounthead (No. 117, 17:03.20), Derek Hrzek and



Back for Novi, from left, are all-state selections Chris Toloff, Tim Moore, Mark Avenius and Erik Walle.

Adam Frezza (No. 127, 17:00.40) and junior Michael Colt (No. 35, 16:26.60). The team has outstanding young runners moving up, Ford said. "Our goal is to get out of the regional," Hrzek, a transfer from Bloomfield Hills Roper, should help provide depth.

Novi: Defending state champion returns top four all-stars from last season's championship team — junior Tim Moore (No. 3, 15:27) and seniors Chris Toloff (No. 7, 15:42.60), Erik Walle (No. 22, 16:25.50) and Mark Avenius (No. 17, 16:09.10). "One thing we have going for us is confidence," Coach Bob Smith said. "Being the defenders, they know they can do it."

Trenton: Finished fourth in Class B, highest Metro-area team, second in regional, first in Mega Red. Now up against the smaller A schools that moved into Division 2. Top runner is senior Pat Roberts, sixth overall in 15:44.70, top Metro B individual. Coach Nelson MacNicol's team returns four of seven — Roberts, junior Scott Kallgren (No. 73, 16:50.80), and seniors Brian Alexander (No. 107, 17:03.40) and George Benschky (No. 218, 18:03.00). "We've got four kids who can compete, we lost Dan Wilkins to Central

Michigan," MacNicol said. "Now we need our other runners to step up."

White Lake Lakeland: Won the Kensington Valley Conference meet, upsetting Novi. Fourth in the Oakland County meet. Coach Randy Wilkins has four of his top five returning — senior Pat Klein, fifth at states in 15:40.80; junior Brian Theut, 33rd in 16:34.80 and fifth in the KVC in 17:06; senior C.J. Hadding, ninth in the KVC in 17:32; and senior Ryan Bartman, a varsity runner for two years who should improve this season. "They didn't qualify for states for the first time in 16 years, but they should rebound," said Salyers, coach of rival Millford. One of top 10 teams, but in a tough regional.

INDIVIDUALS TO WATCH

Mark Avenius, sr., Novi: Last season, he finished 17th in Class A at the Michigan High School Athletic Association cross-country finals Nov. 6 at Michigan Speedway in 16 minutes, 9.10 seconds. "He is one of our most injured runners," Coach Bob Smith said. "He is a talented mix of speed and endurance."

Matt Daly, sr., Detroit Catholic Central:

eight in 1943. "Last year was a breakout year, he realized he could go that extra notch up by working a little harder. He was regional champion and Catholic League champion as a junior. He knows what he has to do every step of the race," Coach Tony Magni said.

Pat Klein, sr., White Lake Lakeland: Finished fifth in 15:40.80. He's a strong runner mentally who comes on strong at the end of the season. He was fourth at the KVC meet in 16:35, sixth in the county in 16:39, taking more than a minute off in two weeks. A two-time all-stater, he was "an integral part of their state championship team in his freshman year," Millford Coach Brian Salyers said. "He's a very talented young man."

Tim Moore, jr., Novi: Third at states in 15:27.00. "He has an ability to run in oxygen debt, he has a high tolerance for pain," Coach Bob Smith said of Moore. "That means that he can still push himself farther when others break down." His top four defending state champion runners "have four distinct personalities that mesh together," Smith said.

Pat Roberts, sr., Trenton:

Metro B individual, undefeated until the state meet, winning at regionals and in the Mega Red. Best time last season was 17:38 in an invitational. "He's a very smart runner, he thinks, he plans and he has goals," Coach Nelson MacNicol said. A two-time all-stater, "he is injury-free and his goal is to improve his time and help the team finish higher," MacNicol said.

Chris Toloff, sr., Novi: Finished seventh in 15:42.60. "He's blessed with tremendous foot speed, he's the fastest runner on our team," Smith said. "He could be a sprinter if we needed one. He has the school record in the 3,200 meters, 9:25. He's capable of getting down and having a hellacious kick."

Erik Walle, sr., Novi: Finished 22nd in 16:25.50. "He was right behind Mark (Avenius) at the state meet, he's just a whisper away," Smith said. "He's full of grit and determination, he'll give you 110 percent every time." Walle finished seventh at the KVC and county meets, in 16:47 and 17:14, respectively.

Leave a message with day and evening telephone contact numbers for Bev Eckman at (313) 222-2922 or

Coach appreciates team's work ethic

By Bev Eckman
The Detroit News

NOVI — The alarm clock buzzes before the birds start chirping.

Novi senior Eric Walle jumps up and scurries to a 6:15 a.m. practice.

"That's early, but you've got to do what you've got to do," he said.

What Novi's cross-country team is trying to do is win a third consecutive state championship.

"The expectations keep going up," Walle said. "The first year, there weren't any. But each year it gets higher and the other teams know more about you, so there's fewer surprises."

And greater expectations.

"The first year there was no pressure, we didn't know what to expect," junior Tim Moore said after a recent weight-training session at the school, before he headed to Kensington Metropark to run. "Now we have to work much harder to do just as well."

"Everyone expects us to win everything. If we go to a meet and we don't win, it's a huge surprise."

Coach Bob Smith said his team is up to the challenge.

"This is the hardest-working group of kids I've ever seen," he said. "And also the most talented."

Rockford, which finished second to Novi at states last season, is likely to be tough again.

"I'm always amazed at Rockford," Novi senior Mark Avenius said. "They start out strong and stay that way all year."

"We always pick up at the end, we have the last two years. Coach Smith is very good at that, knowing when to taper off so we pick up at the right time."

Novi will find plenty of challenges in the Kensington Valley

Novi's quest

According to Michigan High School Athletic Association statistics, eight schools have won three or more state boys cross-country championships. Novi Coach Bob Smith and his team have made joining that list their goal. Novi won the last two Class A championships and, after MHSAA restructuring, goes for the Division I championship this season. The teams that have won three or more championships are:

Class A: Jackson High School, three, 1947-49; Lansing Eastern, three, 1955-57.

Class B: Alma, three, 1950-52; Ypsilanti, three, 1945-47.

Class C: Benzonia Central, three, 1964-66; Charlevoix, five, 1967-71.

Class D: Fowler, three, 1988-90; Grass Lake, three, 1995-97, co-champion with Bear Lake/Onkama, 1998.

Bev Eckman

Conference, too. The league has produced the last five Class A champions — Novi and White Lake Lakeland have two titles apiece and Brighton one.

This season, because of restructuring by the Michigan High School Athletic Association, the teams will compete for the Division I state title.

"This is my last chance to do it again," Avenius said. "Our last chance to do something only a few teams have done in the past."

And if the Wildcats win another state title, it won't be because others expected them to.

"It's not just what other people expect," Walle said, "but what we expect ourselves to do."

All the sweat and tears pay off

By JASON SCHMITT
Sports Editor

Off-season training has helped Novi win two straight titles

Champions aren't built overnight. They aren't even built throughout the course of an entire season.

Championship teams are built over a number of years, a number of long, arduous workouts. In snow, in rain, in the heat of the summer sun, the work almost goes unnoticed. It's there, even if an outsider cannot see it. The time, the miles, the sweat. They're all there.

But in the end all that matters is who is standing up on the platform at Michigan International Speedway, proudly accepting the Class A state championship trophy.

For two consecutive seasons, that team has been Novi.

For each of the five runners in last year's race, along with the team's first

alternate, memories of that special day linger on. But more importantly, memories of workouts long ago keep the team going, yearning for another day in the sun at MIS.

"The harder they work, the luckier they get," Coach Bob Smith said of the members of his team. "We're not reinventing the wheel here. We know how to win."

Much of the success can be attributed to the knowledge of hard work passed on each year from class to class. Novi's first championship team consisted of three seniors and four underclassmen. Each of those four guys, Chris Toloff, Eric Walle, Mark Avenius and Tim Moore, returned last year to lead their team to another state title.

Fortunately for Smith, all return this season, and along with Mitch Erickson and Steve Szwest form perhaps the best team in the state, again.

"I've always seen those guys set apart from me - they were better," Avenius said of his mentors. "But I learned a lot from them as far as dedication goes. My brother (Kevin) always got me to run on the weekends."

Each of the returnees, and many of their peers, have found their way into area streets and parks. As rigorous as Smith's in-season workouts may be, his athletes put in a tremendous amount of miles in the offseason.

Smith does not work with his team first hand, but he does keep in contact with all

of his captains. But with coaches like Walle, Moore, Toloff, Avenius and Szwest, well, let's just say the team was in good hands.

"I talk to each of these guys all summer, and I get five different points of view," Smith said. "Anyone can run, but these guys are really smart runners. They understand what they need to do."

As captains, each of the five have earned the respect of their coach as well as that of their teammates.

"I want them to take ownership of the program," the coach said. "And I think they've really understood that. They need to make decisions and they're feeling really good about what they're doing."

Smith requires each team member of the

team to run 200 miles over the summer. Having started running the Monday after school was dismissed, most runners surpassed that total in preparation for their title defense. Toloff and Moore will approach 650 miles when all is said and done, while Avenius won't be far behind at 540.

"We usually had the same amount of people at each of our workouts," Szwest said. "We had a set schedule of when we were going to run. Sometimes not everyone would show up, or sometimes if someone had to leave early, we would make it a short workout. If we felt healthy and had time, we would go longer."

Team workouts included an average of 10 runners or so, but sometimes had just three or four guys participating. Their

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Photo by JOHN HEIDER

Mark Avenius encourages Steve Szwest in the weight room

Training to be the best is what Novi does best

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jaunts led them to various parks, including Maybury and Kensington. Sometimes their workouts took place in the school's weight room, where the guys worked out their upper bodies. Basketball, street hockey, anything to get in shape for this fall.

"I pretty much just followed the others when I was a freshman and a sophomore," Szwest, a senior, said. "I still sometimes ask Mark and Eric questions."

Avenius said he and his fellow veterans are trying to instill a sense of pride and tradition to the underclassmen, pushing them at workouts and encouraging them along the way.

"I'm trying. I try to push them every day out there," he said. "That's pretty much the same

thing they did to me.

"I'd like to just see them work as hard as we have and just try. If they put in the effort and miles, at least they'll be successful in their own minds."

Avenius said now that he understands what it takes to become a state champion, he feels this year's team in right on track.

"We are already driving a lot harder than we have the last two years," he said. "I mean we're not changing our workouts, but we're adding things here and there. You can tell the hunger is there."

If the hunger is already there, then who's to say how emaciated the team will be come November. Perhaps a Ram sandwich will be served.

Runners set for 2nd title defense

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Senior Dan Stevens is a smooth runner, possibly the most natural runner on the team according to his coach. He'll push the others for a starting position. Sophomore Tim Kava has drawn rave reviews from his coach for two seasons now, and last year ran the second-fastest Cass Benton time ever (for freshmen). Only Tim Moore has a faster first-year time.

Todd Foren (junior) and Eric Saurer (senior) also both posted sub 18-minute times at Cass Benton last year and harbor hopes of cracking the team's top seven.

A trio of juniors round out the team and like the others, have a shot at helping out this year's team. Matt Harsha-Strong, Derek BuWalda and Steven Duda all ran mid-18 minute Cass Benton times a year ago and have worked out with teammates this summer to better their times.

"Right now we've got nine people for three slots, and it's really close," Smith said. "It's really kind of funny. Some of these kids are coming into this season better than they finished last season."

Not too bad of news considering 80 percent of the championship team is back.

"I like the start," Smith said.

Novi opened up its season Wednesday against Northville (after the Novi News' deadline) and are now off until Sept. 7 when they take on league rival Lakeland.



Photo by JOHN HEIDER

Quite often Novi team members will switch up, with someone different leading the pack on a run.

Champs ready to defend title

By JASON SCHMITT
Sports Editor

There's no secret that Novi's the team to beat in Class A boy's cross country in 2000.

That secret jumped out of the bag as soon as the state found out seven of Novi's top eight runners from the 1999 championship team were on this year's roster.

But just like the last two years, the Wildcats are not alone. Rockford, who has placed runnerup to Novi both seasons, has the majority of its talent back as well. Both Novi and the Rams should compete for the title, which will once again be held at Michigan International Speedway in Brooklyn, MI.

Junior Tim Moore, who placed third at the state finals a year ago, and senior Chris Toloff (7th) will lead the 'Cats. They'll be joined by fellow all-staters Mark Avenius (17th) and Eric Walle (22nd), both seniors.

"This may be it for our dynasty,"

coach Bob Smith said. "All of our strength is up at the top now. Unless we have a few guys step it up as freshmen and sophomores, this is our last great chance at states.

"We're the only team in the state with four all staters returning."

Smith's biggest concern is the same as it has been each of the last two years. He has to find a fifth runner who can step it up and help the team out. Two seasons ago that runner was Mike Burns. Last year Nick Bassitt came through for his team.

This year Smith has several runners who have shown promise early on. Senior Steve Szwest, who is a co captain along with the big four, has shown he's got the leadership skills to go along with four years experience in the program. Smith said he's had a great summer, his best ever, and should battle it out with junior Mitch Erickson.

Erickson was Novi's seventh runner at last year's state meet, while Szwest

was the first alternate. Both have posted a Cass Benton (Novi's home course) best time of 17 minutes, 23 seconds. Smith said right now it's really close, but he hopes they'll both push each other and that both will close the gap between them and Avenius and Walle.

"Someone's got to step it up and run with what Nick ran last year," Smith said. "This is the same team as last year, without Nick. Is it a better team that last year, I don't know."

"None of the other kids are running with the top four (Moore, Avenius, Walle and Toloff), but they're showing that they're capable of. They are getting closer and closer."

Erickson and Szwest aren't alone in their quest for the fifth spot. Four other runners are close behind, and may be the ones to score the critical points the team needs come November.

CROSS COUNTRY SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	H/A
9/7	Lakeland	A
9/9	U of D Invite	A
9/12	Brighton	H
9/16	WLW Invite	A
9/19	South Lyon	A
9/26	Hartland	H
10/3	Milford	A
10/7	Oakland Co.	A
10/10	Pindkey	H
10/14	Gab. Richard	A
10/17	Howell	H
10/23	KVC @ SL	A
10/28	Regionals	A
11/4	Finals	A

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CROSS COUNTRY

Novi running for third state crown

By MARVIN GOODWIN
Of The Oakland Press

They're building strip malls and subdivisions at a breakneck pace in expanding Novi. But even construction workers would have trouble keeping up with the boys cross country team at Novi High School. The Wildcats have raced to two consecutive Class A state championships and, with their group of returnees, another title is possible.

The next project for building runners in the area could be a monument to the distance squad. That might be going too far, but the long-distance 'Cats have gained a certain amount of notoriety around the school, the city and the state.

"We are definitely the pride of Novi," coach Robert Smith said recently. "People really talk to us and look to us for a lot of guidance." More of the same could happen after this season.

Here are Oakland County's top boys cross country teams.

■ **1. Novi** — The Wildcats might have the best 1-2 punch in the state in Chris Toloff and Tim Moore. Toloff, coming off a solid track season, ran a 4:10.77 1,600 and 9:15 3,200 at the state track meet, a double topped only by national-class runner Dathan Ritzenheim of Rockford, who also returns this season. Moore went 9:19 in the 3,200 last year as a sophomore and Mark Avenius and Eric Walle, both seniors, have solid racing experience. Both were top 25 finishers at last year's Class A state meet.

These kids work as hard as anybody," Smith said. "There are also the intangibles and part of this is confidence ... and mental training."

BOYS PREVIEW

and senior Dan Hurst will be the core group. "They're experienced," Salyers said. "They're not front runners but they're poised to lead the way."

A large group of freshmen are out, completing a squad of around 45 runners.

■ **5. Troy** — The Colts lost five of their top seven runners from last season, but their top two returnees, juniors Nick and Andy Gillett, are among the leaders in Oakland County. Troy was 1-4 in OAA Division I last year and wound up taking 11th at the state meet. "We've got some younger guys and it's pretty much wide-open," coach Kevin Spencer said. "We'll be competitive, but a lot of these guys will be challenging for these spots."

■ **6. Walled Lake Western** — The Warriors are slowly returning to the form of a decade ago, when they had one of the area's top teams. Juniors Steve Aspinall and Kevin Naughton lead the way, with senior Mike Aschinger supporting. Western was fifth in the 12-team Western Lakes last year. "I'm a little unsure, but I think we could equal or better that," coach Mike Formanek said.

■ **7. Troy Athens** — Half the squad will be seniors, which coach Mike Stallsmith hopes could make a difference in experience. Junior Phil DeCook, a state qualifier from last year, is the Red Hawks' leading returning runner with senior captains Ayush Batra, Dan Carter and Thomas Ferri lending support along with Mario Baumann. Juniors Matt Griffen and Dan Safronoff join the leaders and freshman Chris Hammer could make an impact.

■ **2. Lakeland** — It was Novi that broke the Eagles' five-year string of Kensington Valley Conference titles two seasons ago. And last season Lakeland, which won the conference meet, failed to qualify for state for the first time in 17 seasons. Now it's a new season. "We're going to try and make a comeback," coach Randy Wilkins said. "Our league, of course, is pretty tough. Each week the kids have to run a good race."

They'll be able to do it with two-time all-state runner Pat Klein leading the charge. Junior Brian Theut is a state qualifier and seniors C.J. Hadding, Ryan Bartman, Matt Kiley, Gerald MacZuga and Aaron Rickens give the Eagles depth. Brad Skaglund, Chris Schieck and Kevin Felton are promising sophomores and senior Ryan Woodard, a hurdler, could be a sleeper. "We expect to be pretty good this year," Wilkins said. "We'll see."

■ **3. Lake Orion** — With a returning tandem of senior Adam Frezza and junior Michael Colt, the Dragons shouldn't be far removed from the squad that last year won a regional championship, took second in OAA Division I and placed ninth at state. Seniors Chris Morehead, Brandon Keie and Derek Hrzek will help and junior Justin Dew should also help. "We played an underdog role last year and did well with that approach," coach Stan Ford said, "but with another year of these guys and lot of them being seniors, I hope we'd improve on our standings."

■ **4. Milford** — The absence of a front-line runner won't hurt the Redskins, who are always battle-tested in the rugged KVC. "We have a group of kids who are going to be very balanced and united in a team effort," coach Brian Salyers said. Juniors Nick Kopczyk, Casey Barnes and Tyler Van Acker, sophomore Pat Miller

■ **8. South Lyon** — The Lions' 1-5 dual meet record last year is deceiving because they're in the tough KVC, which had four top-10 finishers at last year's Oakland County meet. South Lyon was ninth. Coach Scott Smith is trying to close the gap with brother Bob, who coaches Novi. South Lyon has its second-largest squad of runners, who'll be led by Brian Lee, Nick Pearce and Andrew Lapham, all juniors, and seniors Matt Micks, Dan Cabadas and Nate Pedersen. "We plan on being competitive with anybody in the league," Smith said.

■ **9. Rochester Adams** — The Highlanders were hit hard by graduation, but could be spurred by the girls team, one of the best in the state. Seniors Dave deSteiger and Omar Youssef are the leading runners. "After that, it's anybody's guess," coach Budd Ciciarelli said. "There's holes all the way down. (But) we could be third (in the league)."

■ **10. Rochester** — Look for Chris Gunz to be among the area's top 10 runners. "He's been training real hard this summer and is looking to have a good senior year," coach Larry Adams said. The Falcons were hit hard by graduation, losing their No. 2 through No. 7 runners. "I think I'm rebuilding toward the end of the season," Adams said. "We'll be a contender at regionals, but it will be a long process to get them race competitive."

■ **Watch out for: Birmingham** Seaholm's Mike Barton, a junior who is looking for a breakout season, and a pair of Steve Smiths, one from Birmingham Groves and one from Birmingham Brother Rice, should be among area leaders. Also, junior Andrew Bauer of Bloomfield Hills Lahser — ninth at last year's county meet — and Ben Salvette of Bloomfield Hills Cranbrook Kingswood could close in on the area's elite. West Bloomfield junior Aaron Metler is improving each season.

Oakland County state results

Oakland County teams often perform well in state competition. Here is a look at the area's Class A top 10 finishes at state in the last five seasons.

1999

Boys — Novi (first); Clarkston (fourth); Lake Orion (ninth).

Girls — Rochester Adams (first).

1998

Boys — Novi (first); Lakeland (sixth); Milford (10th).

Girls — Troy Athens (10th).

1997

Boys — Lakeland (first); Milford (third); Walled Lake Central (seventh).

Girls — Milford (fourth); Novi (ninth).

1996

Boys — Lakeland (first); Lake Orion (ninth); Troy Athens (10th).

Girls — Novi (third); Birmingham Seaholm (seventh); Milford (ninth).

1995

Boys — Lakeland (second); Holly (fifth); Troy Athens (ninth).

Girls — Troy Athens (first); Clarkston (fourth); Farmington (fifth); Novi (eighth).

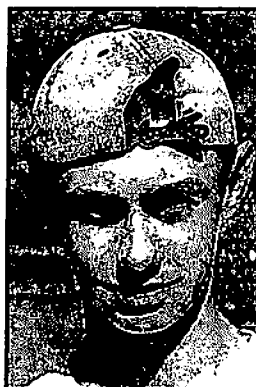
NOTEBOOKS



Lavoie



Walter



Toloff

CROSS COUNTRY

After a solid track season, **Rebecca Walter** of Birmingham Groves appears to be carrying the same form into the cross country season. Walter took second in the girls Division I race at last Saturday's Brother Rice Invitational. Walter, a junior, finished the five-kilometer course in 20:53.

"I was expecting a lot of competition," Walter said. "I didn't know exactly how I'd do, but second place was a nice surprise."

Teammate **Debbi Lada** was eighth, but Falcons coach **George Browne** needs his supporting runners to move up in order for Groves to be a league contender.

Even so, Walter's effort is encouraging.

"These times are like what I put in at the middle of the season," she said, "so I'm starting off pretty well."

■ Milford girls coach **Brian Salyers** watched in awe as the Redskins mowed down defending KVC champ Brighton 15-45 in a dual meet last week. **Katie Kramer** led five Milford finishers ahead of Brighton's top runner.

"That was probably the best performance I've ever had a team do,"

Salyers said. "We performed a lot better than I'd ever dreamed. It was awesome."

■ Defending girls state champion Rockford is scheduled to run at Saturday's Holly Invitational, one of the state's largest meets, at Springfield Oaks. Five boys and girls division races, along with middle school and junior varsity races, are scheduled for the meet, which begins at 9 a.m. Expected to compete are **Emily Anderson** of Marquette, the Upper Peninsula champion, and **Katie Boyles** of Rochester Adams, a three-time Michigan state champion. Anderson ran a sizzling 17:54 in winning last year's Holly Invitational title. Rockford's **Dathan Ritzenheim**, a national high school champion, will also compete.

■ Novi's **Chris Toloff** smashed the course record at Lakeland High last week in the Wildcats' 21-34 victory. Toloff won in 15:32, beating the course record of 15:58 set by Novi's **Kevin Avenius** in 1998. According to Lakeland coach **Randy Wilkins**, the only other time a runner broke 16 minutes on the course was in 1982, when **Joe Davey** of Brother Rice did 15:59.

— MARVIN GOODWIN

Toloff on a tear, breaks two records

By JASON SCHMITT

Sports Editor

It's tough to envision the Novi boys' cross country program getting any better than it has been in its stretch of two-consecutive state titles.

But it is.

Chris Toloff is living proof of that. The senior is putting any doubt that he is the best distance runner to ever compete at Novi High School to rest with his performances on the playing field.

Toloff set two records this past week, one a course record up at Lakeland High School and the other a school record for the Wildcats' home course, Cass Benton. He set the school record last Saturday at the University of Detroit Mercy Invitational, winning the overall race in a time of 15:27. The clocking broke the old school record, held by current teammate Tim Moore, by 18 seconds.

"He has just taken off," his coach Bob Smith said. "I wish I could pin point the date, but I know it was with about two weeks left to go in the track season this past spring. He now sees himself in a whole new arena now. He sees himself on a state level."

The win at Cass came against a field of about 160 runners, some of which were collegiate runners from various Division I and II colleges. No team scores were kept, but Novi would have won the team title as well.

Moore was third overall in the race, and second in the high-school division. His time of 15:46 was a second off his old school record time.

Mark Avenius was the third Wildcat to cross the finish line, taking fifth place overall in 16:28. Tim Kava was fourth on the team and 19th overall in 17:31. Todd Foren and Mitch Erickson were fifth and sixth in times of 17:52 and 17:53. Eleven of Novi's runners finished among the top 21

high school runners at the race. Ten teams competed in the invite.

"This race was the best of both worlds for us," Smith said. "There were a large number of runners, so it gave it that feel of being a big race. But there was no pressure with no team scores being kept. We had three big meets in five days, so we didn't want to compete in meet where we would have to push ourselves if we weren't ready."

NOVI 20, LAKELAND 35

In what was supposed to be the biggest challenge meet of the Kensington Valley Conference season for the 'Cats, the team steam-rolled the Eagles on their home course and Toloff ran the fastest race in the course's history.

Toloff broke free from a small pack, which included teammates Avenius and Moore along with Lakeland's No. 1 man Pat Klein, at about the 1/2 mile mark. From there he continued to extend his lead, even as the race ended. He came in at a time of 15:31, which was 24 seconds faster than the course record, previously held by former Milford state champion Brian Pickl.

Moore was again the runnerup, finishing at 16:18. Avenius was third (16:58) and Kava (17:30) and Erickson (17:42) rounded out the scoring with fifth and ninth-place finishes. Erickson actually finished seventh, but the judges made an error in the scoring. Smith did not refute the decision and still walked away with an easy win.

"Looking back, it was an easy win," the coach said. "But Thursday morning I was a nervous Nellie. I was not going to let my guard down against them."

Novi took on Brighton Tuesday (after the Novi News' deadline) and will next compete in the Walled Lake Western Invitational this Saturday.

Sports

PAGE 3

Three-Peat in the Making?

by Chris Shrader
Staff Writer

While most students were sleeping in and enjoying their summer, they were training. Training to be the best and to repeat their success from years past. Hard workouts all summer is what it was going to take and these boys were up to it, says team captains Eric Walle, Mark Avenius, Chris Toloff, Tim Moore, and Stephen Szwest.. This team was looking stronger than in years past, and by far, much more determined to win. The Novi Boys Cross Country team is now ready to defend their state championship for the second consecutive year.

"If everything goes as planned and we run up to our potential, we should win the state title," says Tim Moore, '02.

The season is on its way and the boys mean business this year. They are focused on the "prize", as Coach Robert Smith would say, more than ever. This "prize" is that state championship trophy which they have brought home the past two years. Their hard work and determination shows that these boys are ready to smell the victory at the Michigan International Speedway (MIS), in Brooklyn, MI, home of the state meet, and they want it badly.

Smith has a plan and that is to train his boys the same way as the first year they won the state championship. It worked last year so why not again? This team, overall, is almost the same as last year's. "The team is as good as the last two year's, and we are hoping to make a loud presence at the state meet," says Coach Smith.

At this point, the boys are undefeated as they have beaten conference powerhouse the Lakeland Eagles and cross-town rivals, the Northville Mustangs. With

Chris Toloff and Tim Moore leading the pack, the team has the one-two punch they need to be successful, says the team. "One thing I am proud of is that we have been undefeated in dual meets since October 1997." says Coach Smith. The team has already taken on their share of injuries, though. Eric Walle has just returned to the line-up after a fracture in his foot from a bridge-jumping accident. Mark Avenius, too, has just rejoined the line-up after healing from a bad case of poison ivy that he suffered after blacking out and falling into poison ivy during the Northville meet. Even with these injuries, as in years past the team's strong JV and lower varsity runners have stepped up and helped the team continue their winning ways. "This year's team has the potential to win the third straight title. We have a very good team with seven



The cross country team poses for a picture after last years state championships. This year they're trying for a tree-peat.

guys fighting for the last few spots," says senior Dan Stevens. '01.

This year could be another successful one for Novi, but it's going to take the hard work and determination

Veterans win Western Invite

By JASON SCHMITT

Sports Editor

Another invitational, another Novi cross country victory.

The boy's squad won the junior/senior heat of the Walled Lake Western Invitational this past weekend, taking three of the top four spots en route to a dominating performance. The Wildcats finished with 28 points, well ahead of second-place Northville (73). Brother Rice was third with 92 points and the host school was fourth with 105.

Chris Toloff won the race in a time of 16:40, finishing alongside teammate Tim Moore (16:41). Mark Aventus was a solid fourth (17:09) and Mitch Erickson (10th in 17:42) and Todd Foren (11th in 17:43) rounded out the scoring five for Novi. Steve Szwast and Eric Saurer were 17th and 19th to round out the top seven.

The 'Cats finished fourth out of nine teams in the 9/10 portion of the race. Tim Kava ran a time of 18:32 on the Willis Park course, good for seventh in his race. But there was a large gap after that.

Eric Joseph was 23rd overall in 19:52, followed closely by Scott Bergeson (24th in 20:08). Marc Kalina and Nick Preketes were the team's final scorers, coming in at 38th and 47th.

"I knew going in we weren't really deep with our

Boys' Cross Country

freshmen and sophomores, so I really didn't know how we would react," coach Bob Smith said. "Tim (Kava) ran a good race, but it was a little difficult for him to know where he stood because he is used to running with Mitch (Erickson), Steve (Szwast) and Todd (Foren). But I think he'll learn from this."

Novi finished with a team total of 139 points. Milford's youngsters ran away with the meet (26) with Northville coming in an impressive second (49). Walled Lake Western finished just above Novi with 120 points.

NOVI 17, BRIGHTON 42

Toloff, Moore and Aventus all crossed the finish line together, leading Novi to this easy Kensington Valley Conference win over Brighton last week.

Bulldog Eric Malkowski broke up a five-member Novi pack, which also included Erickson (5th) and Kava (6th). Foren ran a solid race, finishing in a season-best time of 17:50 for eighth place.

Szwast, Saurer, Dan Stevens, Matt Harsha-Strong and Derek BuWalda finished 11-15 in the race.

Boys cross country: Notebook

Catholic Central earns two first-place finishes

By Bev Eckman
The Detroit News

Catholic Central's boys are out in front after the first two big meets of the season.

Coach Tony Magni's Shamrocks won the 28-team West Bloomfield / Brother Rice Invitational Sept. 6, with 66 points and followed by winning the 20-team Division 5 of the Holly Invitational on Sept. 16 with 63.

C.C. senior Matt Daly was first at West Bloomfield in 16:15, second at Holly in 16:32, and is aiming to improve his eighth-place finish at states in 15:43 (in Class A, now Division 1) last season.

"My individual goals are a top five finish at states and a chance to qualify for the Foot Locker Nationals (top eight at the Foot Locker Midwest Regional)," Daly said.

"Our team goals are to win the Catholic League meet, the regional and the state championship."

C.C. has consistently won its league and regionals, but its last state championship was in 1989.

Daly is in another elite group — he's a National Merit Scholar, semifinalist, one of

16,000 in the country and one of 12 at Catholic Central. To get that designation, students had to score in the top half of 1 percent of all students taking the preliminary SAT, a test given to high school juniors to prepare them for later college entrance exams.

Also scoring for C.C. are consistent junior John Krawiec, sixth at Bloomfield / Rice and fifth at Holly, both in 16:48, and brother senior Dan Krawiec, who was 23rd in 17:20 at Bloomfield / Rice and improved to 11th at Holly in 17:11.

Saline surging

Also of note in the boys results is Saline — second at West Bloomfield with 135, third at Holly with 90 (Portage Northern was second with 86).

Saline senior captain **Sean Moore** was the fastest individual in the Division 5 race at Holly in 16:13.

Coach **Tom Frederick's** Hornets were third at the state meet last season in Class A.

"Our goal this year is to return to the top three in the state, and to do that we have to build around our top two

runners, Sean and (senior co-captain) **Ed Davis**," Frederic said.

Saline is now in the South-eastern Michigan Conference Class A Red Division, along with Ann Arbor Pioneer in Washtenaw County, Adrian in Lenawee County and Temperance Bedford in Monroe County, so it's on the outer fringes of the Metro area, but getting closer as Metro suburbia sprawls.

Catching up

The Belle Isle course was wet for the Grosse Pointe Woods University Liggett Invitational Sept. 14. It commemorated the first on-record state high school cross-country meet, held in 1899 between Detroit University School, now Liggett, Detroit Central and a few other programs that are no longer in existence.

The good news is that Detroit Holy Redeemer sophomore **Ray Perez** is back in form, winning in 17:54, leading Redeemer to first on the boys side with 40 points. Southfield Christian was second, 57; followed by Detroit Benedictine, 65; Liggett, 70; and Royal Oak Shrine, 121.

Cross country: Rankings

Team rankings

Cross country team rankings compiled for Cross Country Invitational Results and recognized by the coaches association (number is total of coaches votes and invitational points, which are cumulative):

BOYS

Division 1: 1. Novi, 123. 2. Rockford, 111. 3. Detroit Catholic Central, 108. 4. Saline, 89. 5. Portage Northern, 61. 6. White Lake Lakeland, 39. 7. Ann Arbor Pioneer, 35. 8. Grand Ledge, 32. 9. Brighton, 31. 10. Northville, 31.

Division 2: 1. Holland Christian, 116. 2. Richland Gull Lake, 104. 3. Flint Powers, 71. 4. Flint Kearsley, 44. 5. St. Clair, 43. 6. Caro, 42. 7. Grosse Ile, 36. 8. Grand Rapids Christian, 30. 9. Gaylord, 29. 10. Big Rapids, 24.

Division 3: 1. Stockbridge, 101. 2. Jackson Lumen Christi, 91. 3. Williamston, 86. 4. Benzonia Benzie Central, 70. 5. Ida, 47. 6. Bad Axe, 32. 7. Sandusky, 32. 8. Bangor, 30. 9. Charlevoix, 29. 10. Gladwin, 26.

Division 4: 1. Jonesville, 86. 2. East Jordan, 67. 3. Bath, 65. 4. St. Louis, 55. 5. Bear Lake, 38. 6. Ubly, 34. 7. Jackson Vandercook Lake, 34. 8. Grass Lake, 33. 9. Detroit Holy Redeemer, 30. 10. Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart, 24.

GIRLS

Division 1: 1. Rockford, 60. 2. Saline, 56. 3. Sterling Heights Stevenson, 50. 4. Grand Haven, 48. 5. Romeo, 45. 6. Milford, 40. 7. Troy, 37. 8. Ann Arbor Pioneer, 29. 9. Grosse Pointe South, 26.

10. Rochester Adams, 20.

Division 2: 1. Middleville Thornapple Kellogg, 56. 2. Haslett, 55. 3. Richland Gull Lake, 52. 4. Ludington, 48. 5. Big Rapids, 44. 6. West Branch Ogemaw Heights, 38. 7. Mt. Pleasant, 33. 8. St. Johns, 30. 9. Lowell, 28. 10. Trenton, 16.

Division 3: 1. Wyoming Kelloggsville, 57. 2. Kalamazoo Hackett, 52. 3. Whitehall, 50. 4. Kalamazoo Christian, 43. 5. Lansing Catholic Central, 38. 6. Kent City, 37. 7. Muskegon Orchard View, 28. 8. Hamilton, 27. 9. Milan, 20. 10. Jackson Lumen Christi, 18.

Division 4: 1. Pittsford, 60. 2. Maple City Glen Lake, 53. 3. Ann Arbor Greenhills, 49. 4. Bath, 46. 5. Lutheran Westland, 42. 6. East Jordan, 39. 7. Concord, 38. 8. Southfield Christian, 33. 9. Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart, 28. 10. St. Louis, 21.

Individual rankings

Cross country individual rankings, courtesy of Michigan High School Track & Cross Country.

BOYS

1. Dathan Ritzenhein, sr., Rockford. 2. Chris Toloff, sr., Novi. 3. Kurtis Marlowe, sr., Richland Gull Lake. 4. Tim Ross, jr., Caledonia. 5. Matt Daly, sr., Detroit Catholic Central. 6. Jason Stover, sr., Williamston. 7. Tim Moore, jr., Novi. 8. Sean Moore, sr., Saline. 9. Brian Matt, sr., Holland Christian. 10. Pat Roberts, sr., Trenton. 11. Joe Whitman, sr., Davison. 12. Adam Ludwig, jr., St. Joseph. 13. Michael Grammes, sr., Tecum-

seh. 14. Mike Linch, sr., St. Clair Shores Lake Shore; 15. John Cook, sr., St. Clair; 16. Andy Brickel, jr., Trenton. 17. Ryan Detlor, sr., Dearborn Edsel Ford. 18. Kyle Fujimoto, sr., Rockford. 19. Brian Smith, sr., Rockford. 20. Nick Gillett, jr., Troy. 21. Doug Gibbons, sr., Detroit Catholic Central. 22. Jake Hammerle, jr., Woodhaven. 23. Mark Avenius, sr., Novi. 24. Eric Walle, sr., Novi. 25. Joe Swendrowski, sr., Rockford.

GIRLS

1. Katie Anderson, sr., Marquette. 2. Kalin Toedebusch, sr., Rockford. 3. Katie Boyles, sr., Rochester Adams. 4. Nikki Bohnsack, fr., Rockford. 5. Teresa Bongiovanni, jr., Romeo. 6. Lindsey Blaisdell, sr., Rockford. 7. Abigail Nelkie, sr., West Branch Ogemaw Heights. 8. Elisa Zernlich, fr., Kalamazoo Loy Norrix. 9. Jessica Kraft, sr., West Branch Ogemaw Heights. 10. Emily Anderson, sr., Marquette. 11. Chelsea Loomis, sr., Traverse City West. 12. Katie Kramer, so., Milford. 13. Claire Otwell, fr., Traverse City Central. 14. Anne Zeulke, sr., Grand Haven. 15. Jentry Soule, na, Grand Haven. 16. Kelsey Toedebusch, so., Rockford. 17. Melissa Quisenberry, jr., Middleville. 18. Krishawna Parker, jr., Detroit Crockett. 19. Shannon Stanley, so., Rochester Adams. 20. Caryn Waterson, sr., Benzonia Benzie Central. 21. Callie Adamson, sr., Big Rapids. 22. Natalie Cahill, jr., Sault Ste. Marie. 23. Allison Kraeger, sr., Saline. 24. Rachel Kirvan, sr., Lansing Catholic Central. 25. Carrie Smeltzer, sr., Monroe Jefferson.

State champs fend off DCC squad

By JASON SCHMITT

Sports Editor

For the first time this season, the Novi boys' cross country team received the scare they've grown accustomed to as their last few seasons have gone along.

Despite the tough competition in the Kensington Valley Conference, Novi hasn't had too much trouble topping their opponents this season. But for at least a day, third-ranked Detroit Catholic Central posed a legitimate threat to the two-time defending state champion.

The Shamrocks took their best shot at the Wildcats, but fell just short in their goal to knock off the champs. Novi won the Shamrock Invitational with a team total of 40 points last Saturday at Cass Benton. DCC finished with 44 points and Northville was third overall with 88. Sixteen teams competed in the event, most of them from the Western Lakes Activities Association. League foe Milford brought its B-team and finished seventh.

Chris Toloff finished in an impressive time of 14:52 to win the race for Novi. The time was a career best for the senior, but will not be a school record because of the course modifications made by the DCC coaches prior to the race.

"Anytime you modify a course this much, you have to start over (with records)," Novi Coach Bob Smith said. "But unless you were to butcher the course — Cass Benton is still a tough course to run."

Toloff's teammate, Tim Moore, was runner-up in the race in a time of 15:28. He beat out a pair of Catholic Central runners, who placed third and fourth.

Boys' Cross Country

Mark Avenius finished in a career-best time like Toloff, finishing in 15:54, good for fifth overall. In fact, seven of Novi's top eight runners and 13 runners in all set career bests.

Mitch Erickson stepped it up with Eric Walle still nursing a sore foot, finishing 11th

"I said when this kid (Eric Saurer) was a freshman that he'd be a varsity runner someday...and here he is scoring for us"

Bob Smith,
Novi boys' track coach

overall in 16:37. Eric Saurer was Novi's fifth scorer, coming in at 21st overall in 17 minutes flat.

"Eric (Saurer) was at a band competition in Toledo and he came up for our race and then went back down there to finish their competition," Smith said. "That shows the sacrifice these kids make."

"I said when this kid was a freshman that he'd be a varsity runner someday, and here he is scoring for us."

Todd Foren ran a very "comfortable" race according to his coach and finished 22nd overall, just two seconds behind Saurer. Senior captain Steve Szwast was 23rd overall

in 17:06.

Smith said DCC was missing one of their best runners, comparable to Walle. Walle started the race, but did not finish.

The senior finished 22nd at the state meet a year ago and has missed the last month while nursing his injury. His coach expects him to be back this week.

As for its meeting with Catholic Central, Smith said the Shamrocks will be there in the end.

"It's gonna be a close finish (at the state meet)," he said. "There are definitely three teams in the mix. Catholic Central, on any day, could be the team to beat."

NOVI 21, SOUTH LYON 42

A chance for Smith to challenge his team, the entire team, and he did in this win over the Lions.

Erickson won the race at Island Lake State Park in 17:49, edging out Brian Lee (17:51) for first place. The win was the junior's first of his career.

Saurer performed well again, finishing third ahead of Toloff and Moore. Matt Harsha-Strong was eighth overall and Avenius came in ninth.

"It was a renaissance meet for us," the coach said. "We needed to see if our other guys could step it up and win the meet. These guys have to learn how to win in case Chris (Toloff) and Tim (Moore) aren't racing, or are hurt."

Smith said he thought this race was a "true team effort."

"They did that completely on their own. They would have won the race even without Chris, Tim and Mark," the coach said.

Wildcats knock off 2nd-place Milford 23-33

By JASON SCHMITT

Sports Editor

Novi continued its dominance in the Kensington Valley Conference, knocking off previously unbeaten Milford 23-33 Tuesday in what was a battle for the regular-season league title.

Tim Moore (1st), Mark Avenius (2nd) and Chris Toloff (3rd) all crossed the finish line simultaneously, guaranteeing their team of the win over Milford. They packed in to finish in 17:05 at Possum Hollow at Kensington Metropark. Their nearest competitor, Nick Kopczyk, finished fourth overall in 17:15.

Milford's pack of four runners made the meet interesting throughout, as behind Kopczyk were the other three. Dan DeRusha was fifth (17:18), Pat Miller was sixth (17:23) and Casey Barnes was seventh (17:26).

But Novi came back with Todd Foren, Mitch Erickson and Tim Kava finishing 8-10 to seal the deal for their team.

"They have a great pack," Novi coach Bob Smith said of the Redskins. "But our guys wanted to break that up and they did.

"This win was very, very satisfying. We needed this."

Novi is now 5-0 in the league while Milford dropped to 4-1.

NOVI 19, HARTLAND 44

Prior to Tuesday's meeting with Milford, Novi has had a chance to showcase its talent lately.

The team's last three meets have had three different winners without the last name of Toloff or Moore. Against Hartland on Sept. 28, Mark Avenius stepped up for the win. His team did too, picking up a 19-44 victory over the Eagles.

Avenius won the race, which took place at Cass Benton, knocking off Hartland's No. 1 man Scott Assenmacher by 18 seconds. His time of 16:50 wasn't his season best on his home course, but it didn't have to be. Assenmacher replaced Avenius on the state's top-25 list, a rankings list on the Michigan High School Track website. Assenmacher is currently ranked 24th, or the exact spot Avenius was ranked a week earlier.

Todd Foren stepped up and took third place in the race. His time of 17:22 was not only a season-best time at Cass, but it was a career-best clocking as well.

Mitch Erickson, who won the team's last race against South Lyon, was fourth in 17:39 and Tim Kava and Steve Szwast were fifth and sixth overall. Szwast's time was a season best at the home course, as was Matt Harsha-Strong and Dan Stevens'. Those two finished seventh and eighth in the race.

Eric Saurer was ninth and Tim Moore and Chris Toloff strolled in at a comfortable 10th and 11th place in the race.

Boys cross country: Notebook

C.C. getting strong work from Krawiecs

Brothers Dan and John run races in different ways.

By Bev Eckman
The Detroit News

Cross country runs in the Krawiec family at Detroit Catholic Central.

Dan Krawiec, a senior, and his brother John, a junior, are top-five runners for Catholic Central, which is ranked No. 3 in Division 1.

Dan's personal best this season is 16:22, and John's is 16:19. Both came Saturday at the Haslett Invitational.

"They're brothers, but they're very different, from the music they like to the way they run a race," Shamrocks Coach Tony Magni said. "But they're similar because they're both good and near the top.

"John likes to go out hard and stay with the leaders. Dan will stay with the middle and pick off runners as the race goes on."

John started running in seventh grade, and Dan started in ninth grade. "He's helped me run more on the weekends," John said.

Senior Matt Daly is Catholic Central's fastest runner; he won at the Haslett Invitational in 15:50.1.

In the individual boys state rankings this week, Daly is No. 8 and John Krawiec is No. 19.

The Krawiec brothers have helped compensate for two early season absences from the Shamrocks' roster. John Digiovanni, who is coming back from shin splints, finished ninth at Haslett as Catholic Central's fourth man.

Doug Gibbons, an all-stater as a junior, is recovering from mononucleosis. "I don't know if we will get him back, but we hope so," Magni said.

Catholic Central's goal is to end Novi's two-year run as state champion.

"They're a good team, it should be close," John Krawiec said. "But if we stay healthy, we have a chance of beating them."

At the Shamrock Invitational last month, Novi was first with 40 and Catholic Central second with 44. In the boys state rankings, eight weeks into the season, Rockford is No. 1 and Novi No. 2.

Coming up

Novi is the favorite for Saturday's Oakland County Meet.

The Kensington Valley Conference has three of the top Division 1 boys teams — Novi, No. 7 White Lake Lake-land and No. 10 Highland Milford — and are competing Saturday at 10 a.m. Saturday at Kensington Metropark's Possum Hollow.

Clarkston won the county meet, 79-85, over Novi last year.

On the boys top 25 individuals list, Novi has three boys among the state's top 25: senior **Chris Toloff** at No. 2; junior **Tim Moore** at No. 9; and senior **Mark Avenius** No. 23.

Rankings report

Jim Murray, boys and girls coach at Niles Brandywine, puts together a team rankings package. The boys rankings are done in consultation with a panel of coaches. He has done it for 20 years, and the rankings are recognized by the Michigan Interscholastic Track Coaches Association.

The girls team rankings are coordinated by Sterling Heights Stevenson Coach **Kevin Hanson** and are dispatched by Murray.

Both sets of rankings, along with individual rankings from Michigan High School Track & Cross Country, run weekly in The News.

In his spare time, Murray puts out the Cross Country Invitational Results newsletter, a weekly publication which starts with preseason assessments and runs through postseason analysis. To subscribe, send a check for \$30 to Murray at 1321 Country Club Drive, Niles, Mich., 49120. Or send \$23 for a track and field newsletter, which runs March through June.

■ Team and individual rankings, Page 7D.

Friday, October 6, 2000 | The Detroit News

Cross country rankings

TEAMS

Compiled by the coaches association.
Number is total of coaches votes and invitational points (cumulative).

BOYS

Division 1: 1. Rockford, 137. 2. Novi, 130. 3. Detroit Catholic Central, 126. 4. Saline, 96. 5. Portage Northern, 91. 6. Grand Ledge, 73. 7. White Lake Lakeland, 65. 8. Ann Arbor Pioneer, 46. 9. Traverse City Central, 44. 10. Milford, 41.

Division 2: 1. Holland Christian, 131. 2. Richland Gull Lake, 124. 3. Flint Powers, 102. 4. Flint Kearsley, 80. 5. St. Clair, 79. 6. Caro, 64. 7. Big Rapids, 54. 8. (tie) Chelsea, Grosse Ile, 47. 10. Grand Rapids Christian, 42.

Division 3: 1. (tie) Stockbridge, Williamston, 125. 3. Benzonia Benzie Central, 104. 4. Jackson Lumen Christi, 94. 5. Hemlock, 87. 6. Ida, 74. 7. Bangor, 60. 8. Gladwin, 49. 9. Sandusky, 46. 10. Bad Axe, 45.

Division 4: 1. East Jordan, 142. 2. St. Louis, 109. 3. Jonesville, 108. 4. Bath, 102. 5. Grass Lake, 87. 6. Jackson Vandercook Lake, 83. 7. Ubly, 60. 8. Bear Lake, 38. 9. Detroit Holy Redeemer, 34. 10. Lawton, 26.

GIRLS

Division 1: 1. Rockford, 60. 2. Saline, 56. 3. Sterling Heights Stevenson, 51. 4. Grand Haven, 47. 5. Milford, 46. 6. Romeo, 40. 7. Troy, 35. 8. Rochester Adams, 30. 9. Grosse Pointe South, 26. 10. Ann Arbor Pioneer, 20.

Division 2: 1. Middletown Thomapple Kellogg, 56. 2. Richland Gull Lake, 50. 3. Ludington, 49. 4. Big Rapids, 48. 5. Haslett, 44. 6. West Branch Ogemaw Heights, 38. 7. Monroe Jefferson, 33. 8. Grosse Ile, 30. 9. Mt. Pleasant, 28. 10. Birmingham Marian, 16.

Division 3: 1. Wyoming Keflogsville, 56. 2. Kalamazoo Hackett, 58. 3. Lansing Catholic Central, 50. 4. Whitehall, 45. 4. Kalamazoo Christian, 38. 6. Kent City, 37. 7. Muskegon Orchard View, 28. 8. Hamilton, 27. 9. Milan, 20. 10. Jackson Lumen Christi, 18.

Division 4: 1. Pittsford, 60. 2. Maple City Glen Lake, 53. 3. Bath, 48. 4. Ann Arbor Greenhills, 47. 5. Lutheran Westland, 43. 6. East Jordan, 37. 7. Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart, 36. 8. Southfield Christian, 32. 9. Concord, 30. 10. St. Louis, 18.

INDIVIDUALS

BOYS

1. Dathan Ritzenstein, sr., Rockford. 2. Chris Toloff, sr., Novi. 3. Kurtis Markova, sr., Richland Gull Lake. 4. Tim Ross, Jr., Caledonia. 5. Jason Stovsr, sr., Williamston. 6. Sean Moore, sr., Saline. 7. Brian Matt, sr., Holland Christian. 8. Matt Daly, sr., Detroit Catholic Central. 9. Tim Moore, Jr., Novi. 10. Pat Roberts, sr., Trenton. 11. Mark Groenhids, Portage Northern. 12. Adam Ludwig, Jr., St. Joseph. 13. John Cook, sr., St. Clair. 14. Andy Brickel, Jr., Trenton. 15. Andy Duemling, Ubly. 16. Kyle Fujimoto, sr., Rockford. 17. Nick Gillatt, Jr., Troy. 18. Ed Davis, sr., Saline. 19. John Krawiec, Detroit Catholic Central. 20. Jake Hammarie, Jr., Woodhaven. 21. Joe Swendrowski, sr., Rockford. 22. Brian Smith, sr., Rockford. 23. Mark Avenius, sr., Novi. 24. Pat Klein, White Lake Lakeland. 25. Scott Assenmacher, so., Hartland.

GIRLS

1. Katie Anderson, sr., Marquette. 2. Katie Toedebusch, sr., Rockford. 3. Katie Boyles, sr., Rochester Adams. 4. Nikki Bohnsack, fr., Rockford. 5. Teresa Bongiovanni, Jr., Romeo. 6. Abigail Nelks, sr., West Branch Ogemaw Heights. 7. Lindsey Blaisdell, sr., Rockford. 8. Elsa Zemlich, fr., Kalamazoo Loy Norrix. 9. Jessica Kraft, sr., West Branch Ogemaw Heights. 10. Emily Anderson, sr., Marquette. 11. Chelsea Loomis, sr., Traverse City West. 12. Katie Kramer, so., Milford. 13. Caryn Waterson, sr., Benzonia Benzie Central. 14. Claire Otwell, fr., Traverse City Central. 15. Anne Zeulke, sr., Grand Haven. 16. Jenby Soule, Jr., Grand Haven. 17. Kelsey Toedebusch, so., Rockford. 18. Shannon Stanley, so., Rochester Adams. 19. Callie Adamson, sr., Big Rapids. 20. Natalie Cahill, Jr., Sault

HIGH SCHOOLS

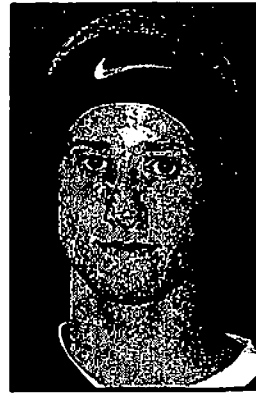
NOTEBOOKS



Kramer



Johnson



Moore

CROSS COUNTRY

Milford's Katie Kramer is among the top runners in the state, but when she's not around the Redskins don't fall apart, they just keep chugging along.

At the Jackson Invitational recently, Milford, without Kramer, finished second with 105 points. Saline was first with 66.

Colleen Johnson, heretofore a sprinter-hurdler in track, took ninth at the meet and was the team's leading finisher, coming in at 20:19 for the 5,000-meter course. "Colleen is becoming ... now she calls herself a cross country runner who can sprint," coach Brian Salyers said.

Johnson, an all-state gymnast, is in her second season of cross country. She pole vaults and runs sprint relays in track.

Kramer, an honor student and standout soccer player, was the highest finishing freshman at last year's state cross country meet.

"She's an elite-level soccer player," Salyers said of Kramer, "and we know going into the season what dates she wouldn't be available."

Both Milford's boys and girls

teams are unbeaten in KVC dual meets, but face Novi in a key match today at Kensington Metropark.

Novi's boys took the state title last year, but the Oakland County meet crown eluded the Wildcats, who'll again challenge for the title Saturday at Kensington Metropark. Clarkston won last year's crown and Novi, which had one of its top runners drop out of the race because of injury, was second. Novi's Chris Toloff and Tim Moore could challenge for the individual title.

Milford, Lake Orion and Lakeland should be among the leading boys teams, while defending champion Rochester Adams, Troy and Milford are the leading girls teams. The meet begins at 10 a.m.

"Our girls have won it nine times and the boys have won it four times," Salyers said. "I consider it the beginning of the stretch run and it's an opportunity to see how our team responds to such a big field. Our kids look forward to it."

— MARVIN GOODWIN

Thursday, October 12, 2000

Toloff leads Novi to county title

By JASON SCHMITT

Sports Editor

Chris Toloff continued his assault on course records and the Novi boys' cross country team won its second Oakland County championship in two years last Saturday at Possum Hollow.

The Novi senior co-captain destroyed Ben Evans' course record by 17 seconds, winning the individual county title in a time of 15:38.7. He ran along-



Chris Toloff

side teammate Tim Moore for the first two miles of the race, but pulled away in the last mile to turn in perhaps his greatest performance ever.

He now owns the course record at both Kensington (Possum Hollow) and the Lakeland High School course and owns the school record at Cass Benton in Northville.

The team dominated the field as Moore took second in a time of 15:58 and Mark Avenius was third (16:32). Novi finished with 50 points to top the 39-team field. League foes Milford (90) and Lakeland (122) were second and third. Lake Orion (183) and Birmingham Brother Rice (237) rounded out the top five.

Novi had a pack of three guys close out the county championship. Tim Kava finished 21st overall in 17:18 and Mitch Erickson was close behind in 23rd (17:19). Todd Foren was within 20 yards of his teammates and took 24th in 17:23.

"That was definitely our strategy, especially in a field this big," Novi Coach Bob Smith said. "I told the guys before the race that they were going to see familiar faces around them. And that's really to our advantage.

"They have each other to count on and as long as they don't just run together, but still race and use each other as a barometer, they're going to do well."

Steve Szwast, Novi's seventh

man, took 36th place in 17:44. The top six Wildcats all earned county medals.

The title was Novi's first since 1998. Last year's team was without Avenius and took second to Clarkston. Despite missing Eric Walle, who is still working his way into shape, the Wildcats had little trouble regaining their title.

The KVC was well represented as six of the top 10 runners were out of the conference.

In the junior varsity race, Eric Saurer was the overall champion, and Novi finished second to Milford. Dan Stevens was eighth overall, Steve Duda was 10th, Matt Harsha-Strong 11th and Walle was 14th to complete the team's scoring.

HIGH SCHOOLS

Toloff, Boyles shine at County meet

By MARVIN GOODWIN
Of The Oakland Press

MILFORD — The state cross country meet may still be weeks away but fans got a glimpse of what could evolve next month at Saturday's Oakland County cross country championships at Kensington Metropark.

Katie Boyles of Rochester Adams won an unprecedented fourth straight individual title, leading the Highlanders to their second straight team championship while Novi's Chris Toloff, trailed by teammates Tim Moore (2nd) and Mark Avenius (3rd), won the boys crown.

"This is huge," said Novi coach Robert Smith. "This is on par with the biggest meets we have (and) we're in good shape point-wise with 50, which is 10 points less than when we won the title two years ago."

Both Boyles and Toloff ran like the wind in setting course records. Boyles came in at 18:50, breaking her record of 19:05 set last year for the five-kilometer



course and Toloff was timed in 15:38. He smashed the time of 15:55 set by Brother Rice's Ben Evans, currently one of Michigan State's top runners, set in 1998.



The Oakland Press/BRANDY BAKER

ABOVE: Rochester Adams' Katie Boyles (right) gets a hug from her mother, Audrey, after winning the Oakland County girls cross country meet with a time of 18:50. **LEFT:** Novi's Chris Toloff kicks it in down the stretch to win the boys race at the County meet

Shannon Stanley took second, Kelly Byrne was fifth, Andrea Moreland was 11th and Denitra Robinson 50th as the Highlanders scored 69 points. Milford, led by

Lisa Canty's third-place finish, was second with 90 and Troy — the Colts' Erin Geldhof was sixth — finished third with 126. The Highlanders finally fin-

ished ahead of Troy, which had topped Adams in four previous meetings. "We finally beat them today," Adams coach Bud Ciccirelli said. "We'd been coming closer and closer to them. But I think we're getting stronger." So could Boyles, who finished a minute ahead of Stanley as the rest of the field fought for the other positions.

"I was going for time pretty much," said Boyles, who has won three straight state titles. "I was taking it out fast. (But) the rest of the team ran so well today, it was definitely a team effort." "We worked really hard and it paid off," said team captain Jessica Flack, "and we have a really good chance to do well at state."

So could Milford, a sleeping giant of sorts which was without its top runner, Tiffany Kaid (7th), Colleen Johnson (10th) and Stephanie Morrison (25th) gave the Redskins four finishers in the top 25. Margo Wolowicz (21st) was Novi's top finisher as the Wildcats were fourth with 183.

In the boys race, only a few steps separated Toloff and Moore until Toloff put it in high gear.

"The course record was my goal," Toloff said. "I went out in about five minutes (for the first mile). I wanted to have even splits. I felt really good. I think my time could've been a little better if I had someone to run with me."

Moore came in at 15:58, and Avenius was timed in 16:32, five seconds ahead of rapidly-improving Andrew Bauer of Lahser, who came in fourth at 16:37.

Milford's Nick Kopczyk took eighth as the Redskins finished second with 90. Pat Klein (fifth) and Brian Theut (10th) led Lakeland to a third-place finish with 122 points, giving the Kensington Valley Conference the top three places. Adam Frezza (sixth) led Lake Orion to its fourth place with 183 while Dan Murray (16th) and Steve Smith (17th) led fifth-place Brother Rice (237).

SUNDAY OCTOBER 8 2000

Cross country

Boys

Oakland County Meet

(at Kensington Metropark)

TEAMS — 1. Novi 50; 2. Milford 90; 3. Lakeland 122; 4. Lake Orion 183; 5. Birmingham Brother Rice 237; 6. Farmington 249; 7. Troy Athens 336; 8. Rochester Adams 341; 9. Walled Lake Western 361; 10. Birmingham Seaholm 374; 11. Birmingham Groves 382; 12. Clarkston 432; 13. Rochester 447; 14. Troy 449; 15. South Lyon 457; 16. Cranbrook-Kingswood 459; 17. Bloomfield Hills Andover 465; 18. Royal Oak Kimball 477; 19. Oxford 480; 20. Berkley 503

INDIVIDUALS — 1. Chris Tolon (Novi) 15:32.2 (course record, old record 15:55 by Ben Evans of Brother Rice, 1998); 2. Tim Moore (Novi) 15:58; 3. Mark Avenius (novi) 16:37; 4. Andrew Bauer (Lakeland) 16:37; 5. Pat Klein (Lakeland) 16:42; 6. Adam Frazza (Lake Orion) 16:46; 7. Kevin Naughton (Western) 16:52; 8. Nick Kopyczk (Milford) 16:57; 9. Chris Gunz (Rochester) 17:03; 10. Brian Theut (Lakeland) 17:03; 11. Dave DeSinger (Adams) 17:04; 12. Ben Salvetta (Cranbrook-Kingswood) 17:04; 13. Dave DeRusha (Milford) 17:10; 14. Steve Mance (Bishop Foley) 17:10; 15. Steve Smith (Grosse) 17:11; 16. Dan Murray (Brother Rice) 17:20; 17. Steve Smith (Brother Rice) 17:13; 18. Pat Miller (Milford) 17:16; 19. Mike Barton (Seaholm) 17:16; 20. C.J. Hadding (Lakeland) 17:16; 21. Tim Kava (Novi) 17:16; 22. Tom Ferri (Troy Athens) 17:19; 23. Mitch Erickson (Novi) 17:19; 24. Todd Green (Novi) 17:23; 25. Kyle Harris (Milford) 17:23.

SPORTS



**We are
the champions**

Dave Shannon (left), replete with the colors of Novi High School, green and white, was a vocal supporter of the Wildcats at the Oakland County cross country meet. Novi captured its second Oakland County cross country title in three years recently at Kensington Metropark. Coach Bob Smith (above, left) joined the squad, which includes Chris Toloff, Tim Moore, Mark Avenius, Tim Kava, Mitch Erickson, Todd Foren and Steve Szwast.

The Oakland Press/MARVIN GOODWIN

Cross Country: Notebook

Novi's boys run away with Oakland meet, led by Toloff

Wildcats take top three places, aim for another state title.

By Bev Eckman
The Detroit News

Novi's boys, gearing up for a third consecutive state title, dominated the Oakland County meet Saturday.

Wildcats senior Chris Toloff (15 minutes, 39 seconds), junior Tim Moore (15:58) and senior Mark Avenius (16:32) took the top three spots.

The meet was held at Kensington Metropark's Possum Hollow area, which will be the site for the Kensington Valley Conference Meet on Oct. 23.

Kensington Valley schools finished 1-2-3 at the county meet: Novi with 50, Milford with 90 and White Lake Lakeland with 122.

"The KVC is always awesome, sometimes there's a different name on top, but it's KVC," Novi Coach Bob Smith said.

"That (county) meet was a

big one, that's one of our barometers to see how we're faring with our county teams — they're our neighbors and they're in our conference and our region.

"We develop a tough skin from running against them every week."

Novi has run past Rockwood the last two state finals, but Rockwood always is tough and leads the coaches' rankings this week with 137 points. Novi is tied for second with Detroit Catholic Central with 136. Detroit Catholic Central should provide a challenge at states.

Two other KVC teams are in this week's Division 1 top 10 — Milford, seventh with 78 points, and White Lake Lakeland, 10th with 40.

Coming up

Macomb County holds its meet at 10 a.m. Saturday at Stony Creek Metropark in Shelby Township.

The top boys powers are Utica Eisenhower and Sterling Heights. Eisenhower won last year with 65 points and Sterling

Heights was second with 100. Sterling Heights won in '98, with Eisenhower second.

Eisenhower picked up a transfer, sophomore Alex Grobel, who would have been among Warren Mott's top two runners, said Mott Coach Mark Urquhart, who also is the Macomb Meet director and president of the county cross country coaches' association.

Sterling Heights Coach Harold Arlt's top two are sophomore Jeff Draggich, whose best time this season is 16:44, and senior Anthony Pavlicic, 16:40.

Sterling Heights won the boys race at the Hanson's Invitational at Delia Park in Sterling Heights with 59 points. Birmingham Brother Rice was second with 73. Sterling Heights was 7-0 and the dual-meet champion in the Macomb Area Conference Red Division.

Romeo had two in the top 10 — Kevin Boose was first in 17:21 and Dave Schwartz was ninth in 17:50. Romeo's team was sixth.

Also among Sterling Heights' top five were Jason Carr, 12th at

Hanson's in 18:02; Andy Hoppe was 13th in 18:03; and Chris Lieblang, 29th in 18:49. Jason Arini, who has been injured, did not run at Hanson's.

Eisenhower Coach Mark Olin is 5-2 in duals. The losses were to Sterling Heights and One loss was to Sterling Heights and one to Grosse Pointe South. Although South is in the Macomb Area Conference, it cannot run in the county meet.

Olin's top two are brothers, junior Troy Terry, whose best time this season is 16:38, and senior Tim Terry, whose best is 16:45.

Filling out Eisenhower's top five are junior Chris Kampe, 17:34; sophomore Alex Grobbel, 17:34; and Tim Copacia, 17:42.

Rematch time

The Macomb County meet Saturday will be a rematch of the top two girls teams from the Hanson's Invitational.

Romeo, coached by Tim Propst, won the meet with 39 points and Sterling Heights

Stevenson, coached by Kevin Hanson, was second with 45. Romeo moved into fifth and Stevenson dropped to sixth in the rankings.

It's "a longstanding rivalry," meet director Mark Urquhart said. "Stevenson is going for its seventh county championship in a row. Romeo has been second the last two seasons. It'll be a test of whether Stevenson's depth can outlast a charge from Romeo and their front-runners."

Teresa Bongiovanni finished first for Romeo at the Hanson's meet in 1927.

Bongiovanni led most of the Class A final last year at Michigan Speedway before Rochester Adams' Katie Boyles caught her with a kick in the final 250 yards.

Propst said his team is ready for the Macomb County meet.

"We do a lot of training at Stony Creek, we're real close to where we want to be," Propst said. "The proof will be Saturday."

Also among Romeo's top five is senior Catherine Schmidt,

fourth at Hanson's in 20:41; junior Stephanie Seyler, fifth in 20:42; junior Melissa Moncion, sixth in 20:53; and senior Jocelyn Bianchi, who is "running in the 21s," Propst said.

For Stevenson, senior Michelle Kinkella was second at Hanson's in 20:02; junior Renee Vela sixth in 20:44; sophomore Nicole Blake eighth in 21:08; junior Katie Danylo 14th in 21:44; and junior Stephanie Proos 15th in 21:56.

Rare tie

In a triple-dual Tuesday at Ford Field in Dearborn, Birmingham Marian's Jenny Waters and Divine Child's Elizabeth Webster finished in a rare dead heat for first in 19:35. Marian finished first with 22 points and Divine Child was second with 37. Marian (9-0, 6-0) clinched the Catholic League dual meet championship.

"I've been coaching almost 30 years, and I've never seen a dead heat in cross country

before" Marian Coach John Dunn said. "That makes us the Catholic League dual meet champions, the first time we've done it in the 21 years we've had cross country at Marian. We were fifth at Oakland County."

Waters, a sophomore, said after the race that her time was a personal best.

"It was actually very different, because I'm not used to it, we were with each other pretty much the whole time," she said. "But I kind of liked it."

Waters, in her first year in cross country, was 14th overall at Oakland County in 20:37.

Catching up

At the Oakland County Meet, Rochester Adams won with 69 points, followed by Milford, 90; Troy, 126; Novi, 183; and Birmingham Marian, 196. Boyles was first for Adams in 18:50.

You can reach Bev Eckman at (313) 222-2392 or at beckman@detnews.com.

THE WILDCAT ROAR

OCTOBER 18, 2000

Cross country team living up to perfection

By Chris Shrader
staff writer

They've been running since June, waiting for moments like the ones they've shared this season. The Novi boys' cross country team has been undefeated this year. With their perfect record and number one ranking in the state, the cross country team is on their way to a promising season, said Dan Stevens, '01.

Up to the present, the cross-country team is undefeated in league races and invitationals. The team has shown some strong performances this season, as they have blown away all their competition. The team just recently raced in the Oakland County Championships and walked away with the first place trophy, "Like true champions" as Coach Robert Smith would say. Chris Toloff, '01, won the meet in a time of 15:38 and was followed by fellow teammates Tim Moore, '02, and Mark Avenius, '01, who were second and third. With the top three places in the county, Novi clinched the county title. Besides the county meet the team has also won the Catholic Central Invite. The team has yet to face a true competitor, said Moore, as they have blown everyone out of the water who have dared to run in front of them.

"This KVC season could mark another undefeated one, as we have yet to lose a conference dual meet since 1998," remarked Coach Smith.

The cross-country team has been unbeatable in the Kensington Valley Conference, (KVC). To this point, no one has even come close to beating

Novi's mighty Wildcats, said Moore. The team has faced everyone in the KVC except the Howell Highlanders. "Howell is good, but I don't think they'd give us too much trouble," said Stevens. Even the newcomers to the KVC, Pickney, couldn't phase Novi. With KVC play coming to an end, Novi has already begun to look towards regionals and states.

"Our season has been running pretty smooth. We haven't faced much competition so far this season. I don't think we will have a true test until the state finals," said Moore.

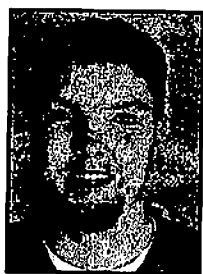
Although, the team is undefeated, they still continue to have injuries across the roster. Eric Walle, '01, is still battling back from injuries. Walle was an All-State runner last year as he finished in the top twenty-five places at the state meet last year. Even with Walle out Novi has looked to it's depth, as the Junior Varsity, (JV), runners have stepped it up and fought for those open spots.

"The team is coming along very well. Walle is really starting to get back to where we need him. Now we just need to wait for regionals and states," said Stevens.

The team thinks, this season has been amazing and is really taking shape. With the perfect season and number 1 ranking their true competition may not cross their path until the state meet in Brooklyn, Michigan. With their perfect record and number 1 ranking, Novi boys' cross-country has shown why beginning to train in June can be so promising for a successful season.

Who will be lucky number five?

Does anyone realize just how good the Novi boys' cross country team is this year?



Jason Schmitt

When healthy, the team is perhaps the most talented squad the school's ever had. When healthy, this team has four

returning all-staters who have been an integral part of the last two state championship teams.

But for now, the team is not healthy. And the worst thing about it is that the team doesn't know if it'll regain the form it had at the beginning of the season.

Senior Eric Walle, who finished 22nd at last year's state meet, is still suffering from a foot injury that has kept him sidelined for much of the last five weeks. He has competed in the team's last few competitions, but is far from regaining his all-state form.

That means that not only will the team need a valuable fifth man to step it up for the stretch run of the season. But the team may now need that fifth man to kick it up one gear to make up for Walle.

The main difference I see from this year's team from those who won consecutive state titles is that those teams had one guy step it up and help the team to the state championship. In 1998 it was Mike Burns. Last year it was Nick Bassitt's turn.

The reason it's a difference is that I feel this year's team has four or five guys who could fill that role. But because the competition for the last three varsity positions has become so heated, I can't tell who that man will be.

Early on I really felt junior Mitch Erickson was gonna be that guy. He was sure to be the next Bassitt or Burns, only I felt he was better. I've been proved right by that, but there have been a few

other guys whose names have snuck in there lately.

I've been really impressed with the late-season surges by Tim Kava and Todd Foren. Kava is on pace to be quite possibly just a step behind junior sensation Tim Moore. His times and finishes mirror that of Moore's just a year earlier. No doubt he'll join Moore on the front line in the future, but his team hopes that future is now. Foren has been within seconds of Erickson and Kava at all the big meets up to this point, and fans shouldn't be surprised if this guy steps it up and is the team's fourth runner at states.

Next we have Eric Saurer and Steve Szwest. Both have been among the team's top eight or nine runners consistently all season long. I don't believe either has cracked the team's top four at a quality meet though. Perhaps they'll be the ones who step it up come October 28. That's the day Novi will travel up to Midland to compete at the regional. It'll also be the last week of practice and competition before coach Bob Smith makes his decision as to who will run among the team's top seven at the finals a week later.

To be honest with you, I feel Erickson will be the one who makes the biggest difference for his team. He's got the potential. He's got the merits. But does he have the desire to be among the state's top 30 Division I runners?

That's what I think it'll take Novi's fifth man to defeat a tough, tough Rockford team.

Novi won last year's title with a remarkable 68 points. Moore was third overall, Chris Toloff seventh, Mark Avenius 17th and Walle 22nd. Bassitt was 55th overall and 35th in the team race.

The team looked very good at the Oakland County meet last Saturday at Kensington Metropark. It'll take a similar performance for the team to take home the hardware one more time.

Jason Schmitt is the sports editor for the Northville Record and the Novi News. He can be reached via e-mail at jschmitt@ht.homecomm.net

Toloff, Moore lead Novi

By JASON SCHMITT

Sports Editor

The Novi cross country team is getting there, although a little slower than coach Bob Smith would like.

The Wildcats won the Gabriel Richard Invitational this past Saturday, edging Saline 51-54 on a cool, nice day. Chris Toloff and Tim Moore finished 1-2, both shattering the old Hudson Mills' course record in the process.

Novi and Saline beat out Grand Blanc (110 points), Churchill (141) and Pioneer (144) in a field of 16 teams.

Toloff was first overall, in a time of 15 minutes flat. Aside from the Catholic Central (shortened course) Invite, his time was a career best. Moore did run a personal-best time for any course, taking second in 15:20.

The race gave Novi's top two a chance to compete against the Hornets' 1-2 combo of Sean Moore and

Ed Davis. Moore was third in the race at 15:41 while Davis was beat out by Novi's third man, Mark Avenius. The Novi senior was fourth overall in the race in a time of 15:55.

"I sort of figured Chris and Tim were better than their front two guys," Smith said. "I even thought Avenius could run with (Sean) Moore."

Mitch Erickson stepped into the fourth position for Novi and finished 14th overall at the invite. His time of 16:40 was one of his best all year and in a race where his team needed him. Todd Foren was fifth on the team and 30th overall in 17:04 and Tim Kava was sixth (35th) at 17:13. Eric Walle ran with the varsity and finished 52nd overall in 17:42. It's not exactly where his coach thinks he should be at this point. Three of the junior varsity competitors (on Novi) beat him out.

Eric Saurer was first overall in

the JV race and the fifth man on Novi's roster. He won the race in a time of 17:03, just ahead of Steve Szvast, who second in the JV race (17:12). Dan Stevens was fourth in a time of 17:23.

"This gives us a pretty good grip on how good Rockford is," Smith said. "Saline is very similar to us in that we both have great 1-2 runners. We're just a little better at number three."

The race was the second-to-last chance for Smith to see his 4-9 runners run in a big-meet situation. Only seven runners can compete at the regional and state tournaments and right now there's a battle for the last three spots on the varsity team.

Novi will try to defend its two-straight Kensington Valley Conference titles Monday at Kensington Metropark. Lakeland won last year's league meet, but Novi hung onto the overall title as Lakeland was third in duals.

Novi dominates the KVC

1,2,4 finish leads to 3rd-straight league title

By JASON SCHMITT

Sports Editor

Novi knew that to avoid what happened to it at last year's Kensington Valley Conference cross country meet, the team would have to pull together for a complete team effort.

That it got as the Wildcats had three of the top four runners and held off a solid Milford pack to claim a league meet title that eluded them last year. Lakeland snuck away with the title in 1999, but were third Monday at Kensington Metropark.

"That was the last thing we talked about before the race," Novi coach Bob Smith said. "Lakeland stole it away from us last year and we wanted a bit of revenge."

Milford took second as a team, scoring 56 points to hold off the Eagles (85). Pinckney was third (114) and were followed by Brighton (144), Hartland (151), South Lyon (157) and Howell (183).

Thanks in part to Chris Toloff, who broke his own course record in a time of 15:33, Novi had five runners earn all-conference honors and ran away with the title, scoring 34 points. Toloff was second at last year's league meet, but made sure he wouldn't be challenged this time around.

"My goal was to break my own course record by at least 10 seconds," Toloff said minutes after the race.

When told he broke the record by just five seconds, he said "That'll do."

"I'm just trying to run some fast times to help boost my ego a bit before the state finals when I run up against Dathan (Ritzenhein)."

His teammate, Tim Moore was second overall in another fast time of 16:01. He just missed his best time on the course, which was the 15:58 he ran at Oakland County, where he also finished second to Toloff.

Lakeland's Pat Klein was third overall in a time of 16:12. He leap frogged Novi's Mark Avenius, who he finished right behind at the county meet. Avenius crossed the line in 16:27 this time around. Klein improved his time by 30 seconds from the county meet.

Howell's Matt French was fifth overall (16:31) to lead the Highlanders and Brian

Theut was sixth (16:40) to give Lakeland two first-team all-KVC selections. Nick Kopczyk was Milford's top runner, rounding out the first teamers in a time of 16:45.

Comprising the KVC's second team were Milford's Dan DeRusha (16:53) and Pat Miller (16:54), Pinckney's Greg Pope (16:57), Hartland's Scott Assenmacher (16:57), Brighton's Kevin Glenapp and Novi's Todd Foren (17:05) and Mitch Erickson (17:07).

"I think we're getting there (as a team)," Avenius said shortly after the race. "It's always nice to win the conference because obviously this is a great league."

Most of Novi's runners ran career bests at Kensington on a day which was overcast and cool and nearly perfectly suited for good times. Eric Walle finished sixth for Novi in the varsity race, posting a season-best time on the course (17:31). Eric Saurer finished right behind Walle in 22nd (17:34).

"We need to stop and smell the roses for awhile with this one," Smith said. "When these guys look back and watch their predecessors go after these types of accomplishments, they'll realize just how lucky they were."

"My former principal Art Miller came up to me a few years back and said, 'when are you going to win a league title?' and I said 'when we win states.' This league is that tough."

The KVC title was Novi's third straight and kept the Wildcats undefeated in all events this season.

"The thing that's interesting about this win is that we had our number six guy (Tim Kava) running in the junior varsity race," Smith said. "That shows the depth of this team."

Kava won the JV league title and teammate Steve Szwast was runnerup. Dan Stevens took fourth and Matt Harsha-Strong was 12th.

Each of the KVC teams will head up to Midland Saturday to compete in the regional meet. Only three out of the 15 teams at the regional will advance onto the state finals Nov. 4 at the Michigan International Speedway in Brooklyn.



Photo by JASON SCHMITT

From left, Walled Lake Western's Kevin Naughton, Lakeland's Pat Klein, Novi's Chris Toloff and Milford's Nick Kopczyk all should qualify for states, but one of their teams will not.

Novi joins tough regional

By Stephen Bell

MILFORD TIMES SPORTS EDITOR

In just over two weeks, Milford and Lakeland's cross country teams will be competing for the right to run in the Division I state final. Their regional will be in Midland. The Huron Valley schools will be joined by the rest of the KVC, along with Northville, Pontiac Central, Pontiac Northern, Walled Lake Central, Walled Lake Western, Waterford Kettering and Waterford Mott.

Why is Region Seven, the state's toughest, being held two hours away from the participating schools?

"No one would host the regional," Nate Hampton, assistant director of the Michigan High School Athletic Association, said. "I asked Milford, I asked Novi, I asked all the schools in that region. After repeated requests, we had to move forward."

Forward to Midland.

"The truth," Milford coach Brian Salyers said, "is that the MHSAA, that Nate, is not happy with the KVC. Our league, essentially, was united in the fact that we would not host it, to make a statement. Nate didn't take kindly to it, and shipped us off to Midland."

"What are they protesting?" Hampton asked. "Running the race?"

"We could have hosted the regional," Huron Valley Schools Athletic Director Gene Balawajder said. "But

we felt, as a group, that would have given our blessing to throwing our kids into a bloodbath amongst themselves."

That bloodbath was brought about by the dire competitiveness of the region. The KVC is far and away the state's best cross country league. At Saturday's Oakland County meet, for instance, the first three teams, out of 39, were from the KVC. In Novi, Lakeland and Brighton the league has produced the state's last five Class A (now Division I) champions.

"It's the toughest in the state," Pat Klein, Lakeland's two-time all-state runner, said. "Every year."

He should know. Last year, when Novi wasn't in the regional, his team didn't qualify for the state meet, by a point. Klein and teammate Brian Theut qualified as individuals. Lakeland is again a top 10-ranked team, as are Novi and Milford.

Last year, eight of the top 25 runners at the Class A meet came from teams in this regional.

And it's not just the elite teams that make this region so tough. It's that all the programs are competitive, which isn't the case across the state.

"Our region will probably have 14, maybe 15 teams finish the race," Novi coach Bob Smith said. "Some of these other regions may have four or five full teams finish a

race."

The KVC schools are particularly perturbed with the MHSAA's decision to reduce the number of individual qualifiers, a move which, with a region such as number seven, can keep some of Michigan's better runners out of the finals. Previously, individual qualifiers were selected from the top 10 runners at a regional who were not members of the three qualifying teams. Now, to qualify for the state finals individually the athlete must medal -- that is, place within the top 15 -- at the regional. There had been an average of 10 individual qualifiers per region. Now, according to Michigan Track Coaches Association president Greg Miller, there will be about five.

Had this setup been in place, for example, in 1996, a young runner from Milford named Tom Greenless would not have made the state finals. Greenless, of course, went on to place fourth at the 1999 Class A meet.

Off the course, there's another downside to the regional being held in Midland. Programs with the histories of Lakeland and Milford have large followings.

"My concern is that it's so far to travel for our supporters," Salyers said. "Only 14 of the 65 kids on the boys' and girls' teams will be running, but everyone wants to be there. It's a logistical challenge."

HIGH SCHOOLS

Novi, Milford prep for regionals

By MARVIN GOODWIN
Of The Oakland Press

With Kensington Valley Conference titles wrapped up, Novi's boys and Milford's girls now get set to do it all over again at Saturday's regional cross country meet in Midland.

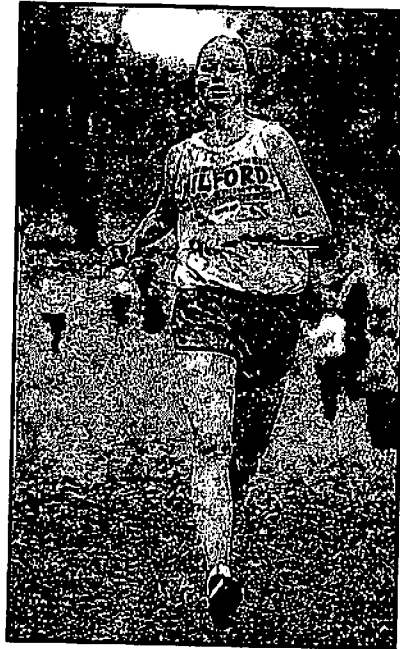
The Division 1 regional at Midland pits the KVC schools plus Northville, Waterford Mott, Waterford Kettering, Walled Lake Central and Walled Lake Western among others as they compete for places at the state finals.

The top three regional placers plus top finishing individuals qualify for the state cross country meet Nov. 4 at Michigan International Speedway.

Novi, the two-time boys defending state champion, scored 36 points Monday at Kensington Metropark and hauled away its third straight KVC title, outdistancing Milford (56) and Lakeland (85). Milford easily won the girls crown, putting four runners among the top five as it scored 23 points. Brighton had 57 points and Novi had 96.

Now the best part of the season continues for the KVC, which has enjoyed success in both boys and girls cross country at the state level in past years.

Novi, Lakeland and Brighton have combined to win the last five Division 1 state championships, while the girls have often had a top 10 team finish from the conference in the past decade.



The Oakland Press/CHARLIE CORTEZ

Milford's Katie Kramer (left) won the girls race, while Novi's Chris Toloff captured the boys race at the Kensington Valley Conference meet

"All of us take pride in that," Novi boys coach Robert Smith said. "This conference, year in and year out, is to be reckoned with at the state meet. Not too many years ago, we were fourth in our conference and ninth at the state meet."

Novi's Chris Toloff, unbeaten this year, won the individual title in 15:33 and was followed by teammate Tim Moore (16:00), Lakeland's Pat Klein (16:12) and Novi's Mark Avenius (16:27). Nick

Kopczyk, who took eighth, led Milford.

Katie Kramer of Milford led the Redskins, finishing first in 19:26. Teammate Lisa Canty (19:39) was second, Tiffany Kaid was fourth (20:16) and Colleen Johnson fifth (20:16). Lakeland's Kristyn Kern took third in 20:04.

Milford coach Brian Salyers was confident going into the KVC meet.

"We had done pretty well in the league and dual-meet portions of

the season and we recognized we were probably the best team going in," he said of his squad, which finished with a 7-0 dual-meet record. "Twenty-three points today, that's awesome."

■ Holly hosts a Division 1 cross country regional with Rochester Adams, Rochester, Lake Orion, Clarkston and Romeo among teams competing. In the Division 2 meet, also at Holly, Pontiac Notre Dame Prep, led by Megan Schneider, will participate.

■ Royal Oak Kimball hosts a Division 1 regional with Birmingham Brother Rice, Troy, North Farmington and Troy Athens among competing teams.

■ At the Division 2 regional at Grosse Pointe South, Bloomfield Hills Lahser's Andrew Bauer could contend for the individual title, while Birmingham Seaholm and Birmingham Groves could contend for state berths. In the girls race, Birmingham Marian and Seaholm are contenders meet contenders.

■ At the Division 3 regional at Grosse Ile, Steve Mance, the Catholic League Division III and IV champion, will lead Madison Heights Bishop Foley.

■ Oakland Christian runs at the Division 4 Region 34 at Grosse Pointe Woods University-Liggett, while Rochester Hills Lutheran Northwest, Royal Oak Shrine and Southfield Christian are among schools competing at the Region 35 meet at University Liggett.

Cross country

Novi part of strong Midland regional

By Bev Eckman
The Detroit News

One of the top cross country regionals to watch Saturday is at Midland, with four of the top 10 Division 1 boys teams in the state — all Metro-area teams — in contention.

The regional, being run at Northwood University, has more ranked teams than any of the other 35 regionals, boys or girls.

Midland's four top teams are headed by two-time defending champion Novi, which is No. 2 in the coaches association rankings this week, with three of its top five runners ranked in the top 10 — senior Chris Toloff, junior Tim Moore and senior Mark Avenius.

Detroit Catholic Central, ranked No. 3, also has three top runners — senior Matt Daly, senior Dan Krawiec and his brother, junior John Krawiec. C.C. is at the Southgate Anderson regional, up against Saline, whose boys are ranked No. 4 (and whose girls are No. 3).

At the Operation Friendship Meet Tuesday, Daly won in 17:44, John Krawiec was second, 17:51, and Dan Krawiec third, 17:51, leading C.C. to victory.

The Midland regional starts with girls at 11:30 a.m., followed by boys at 12:30 p.m. Besides Novi's boys, it has Highland Milford, No. 7; Brighton, No. 8; Northville, No. 9; as well as White Lake Lakeland, which was No. 10 last week and is the top honorable mention this week.

Northville is peaking, winning the Western Lakes Activities Association title last week at Kensington Metropark with 67 points, fol-

Rankings

Team
Cross country team rankings compiled for Cross Country Association Regionals and recognized by the coaches association. Numbers total of coaches votes and individual points (which are cumulative).

BOYS

Division 1: 1. Rockford, 182; 2. Novi, 162; 3. Detroit Catholic Central, 161; 4. Saline, 150; 5. Grand Ledge, 119; 6. Portage Northern, 96; 7. Milford, 88; 8. Brighton, 71; 9. Northville, 64; 10. Troy, 59; 11. Westland, 57.

Division 2: 1. Holland Christian, 168; 2. Big Rapids, 158; 3. Richard, 146; 4. Lake, 126; 5. Flint, 108; 6. Grand Haven, 106; 7. Eastland, 105; 8. Grosse Ile, 73; 9. Flint Kearsney, 68; 10. Ann Arbor, 67; 11. Williamston, 65; 12. Hamlock, 67; 3. Shokong, 65; 4. Berntson, 64; 5. Central, 64; 6. Stanger, 63; 6. Jackson Lumen Christi, 58; 7. Saniliny, 57; 8. Red Aw, 52; 9. Garden, 66; 10. Charlevoix, 61.

Division 3: 1. East Jordan, 174; 2. Jackson Vanderpool Lake, 141; 3. Bath, 139; 4. St Louis, 139; 5. Union, 109; 6. Jonesville, 106; 7. Grace Lake, 79; 8. Breckenridge, 68; 9. Detroit Holy Redeemer, 57; 10. Central Lake, 47.

GIRLS

Division 1: 1. Rockford, 60; 2. Milford, 58; 3. Saline, 57; 4. Rochester Adams, 46; 5. (tie) Grand Haven, Sterling Heights Stevenson, 33; 7. Ann Arbor Pioneer, 34; 8. Romeo, 33; 9. Troy, 26; 10. Kalamazoo Ivy North, 24.

Division 2: 1. Middleville, 106; 2. Kalamazoo, 98; 3. Big Rapids, 96; 4. Grand Ledge, 93; 5. Ludington, 46; 6. Park Powers, 44; 6. West Branch Openway Heights, 39; 7. Portage, 35; 8. Mt Pleasant, 34; 9. Monroe Jefferson, 27; 10. Grosse Ile, 24.

Division 3: 1. Kalamazoo Redett, 95; 2. Lansing Catholic Central, 54; 3. Wyoming Kelloggville, 50; 4. White Hall, 45; 5. Berntson, 44; 6. Central, 44; 6. Siltone Bay, 39; 7. Macomb Christian, 37; 8. Kent City, 28; 9. Boyne City, 24; 10. Hillsdale, 22.

Division 4: 1. Maple City, 101; 2. Concord, 105; 3. Lathrop Westland, 50; 4. East Jordan, 48; 5. Bath, 40; 6. Homer, 39; 7. Ann Arbor Greenhills, 35; 8. Pittsford, 33; 9. Hanover Barton, 27; 10. Mt Pleasant Sacred Heart, 17.

Individual
Cross country individual rankings courtesy of Michigan High School Track & Cross Country.

BOYS

1. Dalton Ritzenthaler, 8; Rockford, 2; Chris Giffers, Novi, 3; Tim Moore, Novi, 4; Tim Ross, Jr., Caladonia, 5; Kurt Morrow, Highland Hills, 6; Jason Slovic, St. William, 7; Adam Ludwig, St. Joseph, 8; Pat Kierulff, White Lake Lakeland, 9; Sean Moore, Saline, 10; Brian Kubi, St. Holland Christian, 11; Matt Daly, Detroit Catholic Central, 12; Mark Avenius, Novi, 13; Pat Roberts, Flint, 14; Brian Smith, Rockford, 15; Lance Vanderburg, Jackson Mona Shores, 16; Jake Marinakis, Woodhaven, 17; John Cooker, St. Clair, 18; Ed Davis, Saline, 19; Joe Swenson, Westland, 20; Kyle Rummel, Rockford, 21; Andrew Bauer, Bloomfield Hills, 22; John Krawiec, Detroit Catholic Central, 23; Brandon Robinson, Grand Ledge, 24; Phil McLellan, Shokong, 25; Matt French, Howell, 26.

GIRLS

1. Katie Anderson, Macomb, 2; Kaiti Toedebusch, Rockford, 3; Lindsay Bassett, Rockford, 4; Katie Boyles, Rochester Adams, 5; Nadia Boinack, Rockford, 6; Tanya Pappas, Romeo, 7; Eliza Zambich, Kalamazoo Ivy North, 8; Abigail Neale, West Branch Openway Heights, 9; Jessica Kraft, West Branch Openway Heights, 10; Emily Anderson, Marquette, 11; Chelsea Loomis, Troy, 12; Kaiti Kramar, Milford, 13; Nicole Blah, Wyoming Kelloggville, 14; Kelsey Toedebusch, Rockford, 15; Abby Scola, Grand Haven, 16; Corin Westman, Berntson; 17; Gena Orval, Troy; 18; Traciya City Central, 19; Lauren Fairbanks, Romeo City, 20; Kaiti Anderson, Big Rapids, 21; Rachel Krav, Lansing Catholic Central, 22; Natalie Cahill, St. Clair, 23; Marie, 24; Carrie Smith, Monroe Jefferson, 25; Jess Stewart, Kalamazoo Ivy North, 26; 24; Krishawna Parker, Detroit Crockett, 25; Allison Kracker, Saline, 97; and Livonia Stevenson, 109.

lowed by Livonia Churchill, 78; Farmington, 80; Plymouth Salem,

97; and Livonia Stevenson, 109.

Plymouth Salem's Donnie Warner was first in 16:43; Northville's top finisher was Brian Bilyk, fourth in 17:03.8.

The Mustangs, who've been in the WLAA for 20 years, earned their first title.

"We're in what's probably the toughest regional in the state," Northville Coach Chris Cronin said. "Right now we're hoping to run the race of our lives and finish third."

"Unless they run near their best times, they won't get to the state meet, because they only take 15. If Novi takes three (of the top 15) and Lakeland takes two, and Milford has three kids who can finish in the top 15, come with your 'A' race, or you'll stay home Nov. 4."

Part of that reflects how tough the Midland regional is. The other part is that the rules were changed for this season: The top three teams advance and the top 15 runners, including those on teams, advance. Previously, it was the top three teams plus the top 10 individuals not on teams. That means fewer individuals will make states.

Girls regionals

The only girls regional with two top-10 ranked and Metro-area teams is Holly, which has No. 4 Rochester Adams and No. 8 Romeo. That's a regional matchup of the girls who finished 1-2 at states last year, Adams senior **Katie Boyles**, going for her fourth straight state title (which would be a record in the top division) and Romeo junior **Teresa**

Bongiovanni. Boyles is ranked No. 4 and Bongiovanni No. 6.

The Grand Rapids Christian Regional has Rockford's boys and girls, both No. 1, and Grand Haven, No. 5 on the girls list.

Tuesday at the Operation Friendship Meet at Marshbank Park in West Bloomfield, Detroit Crockett junior **Krishawna Parker** came to the top, winning in 20:13. Parker was the top PSL runner at states last year, finishing eighth in Class B in 18:53.90. She rebounded into the rankings at No. 24 after her victory.

Farmington Mercy was the team winner at Operation Friendship, led by **Valerie Burnisky**, Mercy, second in 22:09 and **Sarah Polletta**, third in 22:46. **Angela Hayes** was fourth for Mumford in 22:54 and **Malaiika Mougoue** fifth for Mercy in 23:01.

Others to watch

Detroit Holy Redeemer's boys were sixth in Class D last year. Coach **Pat Irwin's** Redeemer team, ranked No. 9 in Division 4, will be at Regional 36 on Belle Isle. Regional 35 is also on Belle Isle. There will be 16 teams in each regional. Grosse Pointe Woods University Liggett is host for the regionals, which start at 11 a.m., with Region 35 girls at Lighthouse Pointe.

Leave a message with day and evening phone contact numbers for Bev Eckman at (313) 222-2392 or at beckman@detnews.com.

South Lyon hopes to run individual qualifier at state

By Stephen Bell
SPORTS EDITOR

After all the politics, bad feelings, fear and loathing, there's finally a race to be run. The MHSAA boys' Division I cross country regional seven — South Lyon's regional — will be held Saturday at Northwood University in Midland.

The schools representing the last five state championships will be present — Novi, Lakeland and Brighton, as well as Milford, a perennial top-10 program.

Given the stiff competition, in the past some teams knew they wouldn't finish in the top three, and thus qualify for the state meet, but there was the consolation of having individual runners qualify. That will be harder under the new format in which an athlete must finish in the top 15 at the regional.

Milford has previewed the course, and the report is that it is flat, and fast.

"It will be good preparation for the state meet at MIS," Milford coach Brian Salyers said. "There's not one hill."

1. Novi

The two-time defending state champ. In the last three weeks the Wildcats have won the Oakland County Meet and Gabriel Richard Invitational (barely, thanks to uppity Saline). If secret project Dathan Ritzenhein hadn't escaped from a government job and relocated to Rockford

Chris Toloff would be

considered the state's best runner. But it's not just Toloff. Novi went one-two-three at Oakland County with him. Tim Moore and Mark Avenius. The question on the lips of most XC runners is whether Eric Walle will be healthy enough to give Novi a fourth runner good enough to hold off Rockford at the state finals.

2. Milford

The larger the meet format, the more apt Milford is to score high. The Redskins have no superstar, but a pack that can roll up the points. Which is just fine with Salyers.

"The county, league, regional, state meets, when you step to the line it's so intense up front," Salyers said.

"The makeup of your team comes into play. In a dual meet a team can have a mediocre fifth runner and still get by. But in a larger meet that mediocre runner can be exploited. By the same token, a front-runner can do a lot more damage in a larger meet."

At the Oakland County meet five Milford runners medaled. That hadn't happened in more than 35 years. The Redskins were second there ... to Novi. Novi also gave Milford it's only dual meet loss this year. Milford has beaten Lakeland both in their dual meet and at the county.

3. Lakeland

After not qualifying for the state finals last year, Lakeland has been one of the

state's top teams this season. The Eagles were third at Oakland County, second at West Bloomfield and first at the Oxford Invitational. Senior Pat Klein has been a two-time all-state selection and is the one runner in the field capable of breaking up Novi up front. Brian Theut was an individual state qualifier last season and should be a top-10 finisher at Midland.

4. Northville

Northville has had a very good year in the relative anonymity of the WLAA. The sad fact is that the Mustangs could be one of Michigan's 10 best teams yet not be represented by a single runner at the state meet. This is a team that placed third at the Shamrock Invitational -- after Novi and Detroit Catholic Central -- without having any individuals break into the top 10. Northville's best runners are Brian Bilyk, Joe Lunn and Bill Dalton. Early in the year Bilyk made the top 10 at the Bath Invitational, where the Mustangs placed second to state power Rockford.

5. Brighton

Brighton, the 1995 state champion, went 4-3 in the KVC. Kevin Glenapp, Brad Pero and Eric Malkowski run well together.

6. Walled Lake Western

The team's season will likely come to an end Saturday. But there may be one more week left for Kevin Naughton, who has a good chance to qualify for the state meet. He was seventh at the Oakland County Meet.

7. Pinckney

Pinckney sophomore Mark Pope is a good KVC runner, which is to say a state-caliber runner. Both Novi and Milford put three ahead of him in dual meets, but he could still finish in the top 15 at Midland. At the Bath Invitational Pope finished fifth. The four ahead of him were all from Rockford.

8. Walled Lake Central

Todd Mobley, where art thou? Historically strong, Central is having a down year. The Vikings' top runners are Nick Martonvich and Ryan White. They're not state-quality.

9. Hartland

The Eagles beat two teams in KVC dual meets — Howell and South Lyon. Sophomore Scott Assenmacher has a good chance at qualifying for state, but the team's chances were hurt when its fifth runner was hurt.

10. South Lyon

All season South Lyon has had to combat both its youth and ill health. The result was a 1-6 KVC season. Brian Lee is the front-runner and the number two man. Andrew Lapham, should be healthy. It will be on Lee's shoulders to carry on South Lyon's tradition of being represented at the state meet. He finished only 52nd at the county meet, but that was after getting knocked down early.

11. Howell

The Highlanders were the only team in the KVC which did not win a conference dual meet. But that's no fault of Matt French, who had beat Hartland's Scott Assenmacher among others.

12. Pontiac Northern

Anthony Brown is a good runner -- 41st at Oakland County — but will have to run hard to make state. P-Northern finished ahead of both Waterford Mott and Waterford Kettering at the Oxford Invitational.

13. Waterford Mott

Who's got the Mott's? Not the state finals field. Times for the Corsairs are not so good. Mott's best runner is Jeff Hagen. He was 11th at the OAA II championship, 89th at Oakland County.

14. Waterford Kettering

If this were girls' basketball, maybe. The Captains' top runner, Kellen Rafferty, only placed 169th at the Oakland County meet.

15. Pontiac Central

Last year Central shocked many by reaching the state quarterfinals ... of the basketball tournament. Many of those kids are on the cross country team, getting in shape for some hoop. Hey, it worked for Charlie Bell back in the day at Flint Southwestern.

Stephen Bell is the sports editor for the South Lyon Herald and Milford Times. He can be reached at (248) 685-1507 or sbell@homecomm.net.

Cross-Country

HIGH SCHOOLS

Novi, Boyles aiming for history

By MARVIN GOODWIN
Of The Oakland Press

When the cross country state meet is contested Saturday at Michigan International Speedway, several subplots will be developing, making this competition one of the most intriguing in years.

While Katie Boyles of Rochester Adams goes for her unprecedented fourth straight Division 1 girls state title, Novi's boys will attempt to become the first Division 1 school in more than four decades to win three straight state titles.

And as the Wildcats try to add another state title, their top runner, Chris Toloff, will see how he fares against Rockford's Dathan Ritzzenhein, the defending Division 1 state champion and perhaps the nation's top high school distance runner. Both are seniors.

The meet starts with the Division 3 girls race at 10 a.m. Other boys and girls division races follow.

Ritzzenhein, who clocked a pending national high school record of

The state finals

- What: Cross country state meet
- Where: Michigan International Speedway
- When: Saturday
- Course: 5,000 meters
- Times: 10 a.m. — Division 3 girls; 10:30 a.m. — Division 4 girls; 11 a.m. — Division 3 boys; 11:30 a.m. — Division 4 boys; 1:30 p.m. — Division 2 girls; 2 p.m. — Division 1 girls; 2:30 p.m. — Division 2 boys; 3 p.m. — Division 1 boys.

8:41.5 in the 3,200-meter run in track last spring, hasn't lost a cross country race since his sophomore year. Last year he captured the national Foot Locker Cross Country championship, beating the top high school runners in the country.

Toloff took seventh at state last year, finishing some 37 seconds behind Ritzzenhein. But he had a stellar track season. Toloff was state runner-up in the 1,600 (4:10.77), finishing behind Ritzzenhein (4:08.08). So far Toloff is unbeaten in cross country this season.

"I've been thinking about it for

one or two years, maybe since last year," Toloff said of trying to run with Ritzzenhein. "I've wanted to get up to his level.

"I've experimented with going out faster in some races and I'm pretty sure I can handle any pace that he sets."

Toloff gets pushed by teammate Tim Moore — he was third at state last year — in workouts, according to Novi coach Robert Smith, which also helps his preparation. At the Oakland County meet, Toloff set a course record of 15:38, finishing 20 seconds ahead of Moore, who took second. At last Saturday's regional, Toloff clocked 15:10, only three seconds ahead of Moore.

"Chris is anxious to run with Dathan," Smith said. "The longer he stays with him, the more it will affect his confidence. He's (Toloff) got an excellent kick. If he runs with Dathan, he can finish with Dathan."

Boyles has had a typical season, winning each invitational in which she's raced and often by huge margins. She also set a

course record in winning her fourth straight Oakland County meet title.

But defending state champion Rockford has three runners who have dipped under 18 minutes — a benchmark in girls high school distance running ability — while Boyles has yet to do it this season.

Cross country courses, though, vary in degree of difficulty.

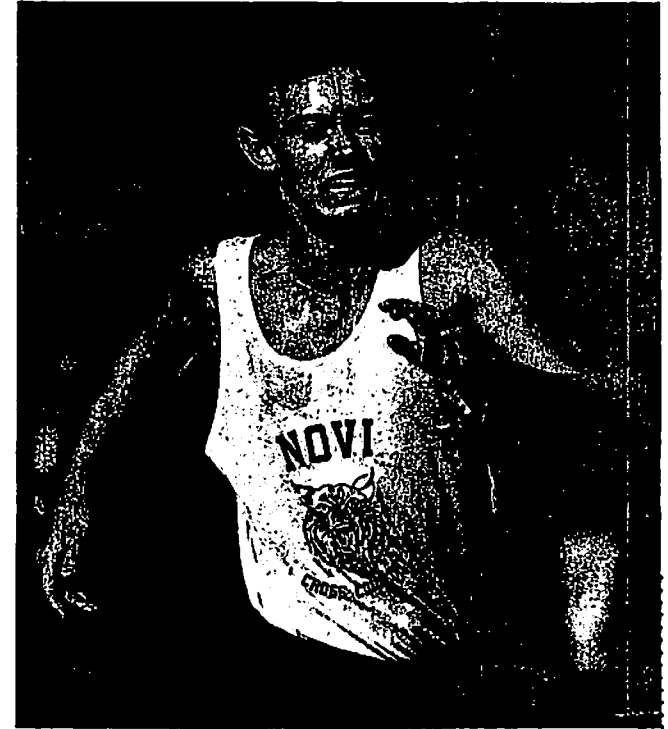
Adams coach Budd Ciccirelli anticipates a great race.

"I'm know I'm going to be nervous," he said. "I'll be thinking, 'Did I do the right thing? Did I train her hard enough?'"

Boyles wants to win, according to Ciccirelli, but it's not consuming her.

"I've had a great career in high school and I've accomplished more than a lot of people have," Boyles said. "There's less pressure (on me) than there ever has been before.

"I'm just thinking about running my best race. As long as I go out there and put up a good fight, that's all that matters to me."



Oakland Press file photo/BRANDY BAKER

Novi's Chris Toloff is hoping to lead the Wildcats to a third state title

Inside the KVC

Novi's Chris Toloff: The boy who would be king

By Jason Schmitt

NOVI NEWS SPORTS EDITOR

For Chris Toloff, Saturday's state final is not just a chance for his team to become the first team since Lansing Eastern in 1957 to

Boys' Cross Country

threepeat as state champions in Division I or Class A. It's a chance for the senior to stake his claim as one of the best cross country runners the state has ever seen. Rockford senior Dathan Ritzenhein solidified his position as perhaps the best distance runner (cross country or track) that the state has ever had after winning both state and national cross country titles last year along with track titles in the mile and two mile.

On Saturday Toloff will try to vault his name into the headlines

alongside Ritzenhein's.

Ritzenhein was the state runnerup in 1998 to teammate Jason Hartmann and won the title a year ago. Toloff was 29th as sophomore and improved to seventh last season.

"I felt I didn't run well my sophomore season and last year I had some injuries that took away from my season," Toloff said. "I know I have the ability to be one of the best, as long as I put in my hard work."

It's that hard work that has Toloff sitting right behind Ritzenhein in the latest individual rankings by John Bishop of the Michigan High School Track and Cross Country website.

Toloff ran upwards of 700 miles this summer and his times have reflected that hard work. Toloff is undefeated in invitationals this season and has broken shattered course records at Kensington Metropark, Lakeland's high school

course as well as at Hudson Mills. He set the school record at Cass Benton.

"I'm confident he could have broken more if we'd have turned him loose," his coach Bob Smith said. "I talk to him almost daily about his workouts. He knows when to train and he knows what he needs to do."

Smith talked of a practice where the team was running repeat 400s on the high school track.

"We were running four in a row and took five minute breaks between sets," Smith explained.

Smith said Toloff came up to him during one of the breaks and said five minutes was too long of a break.

"So I told him to go run bleacher creatures," the coach said. And he did.

Soon after Tim Moore followed him up the bleachers, and then Mark Avenius was in the mix. All three are expected to place among

the top 10 runners at the state meet.

"When you're so determined to do something, you want to go out and do it," Toloff said. "Because you know it's gonna make you better."

Toloff said his training has become more and more intense these past two years because of his passion on the track. He was runnerup to Ritzenhein in the mile run last year, running the third-fastest high-school time ever in the state of Michigan. His 4:10.77 was third only to Ritzenhein's 4:08.08 and John Hughes' 1999 time of 4:10.45.

"My goal was to run a 4:10," the senior co-captain of the cross-country team said. "I thought it was realistic. I definitely thought I could beat John Hughes (3rd in the race) and I wanted to be close to, if not beat Dathan."

Toloff is not concerned solely on his own feats and goals, he's one

of the leaders of a team which will battle it out with Rockford and Detroit Catholic Central for the state title. He's confident his team can win its third-straight title.

"Coming into this year we thought this was going to be the easiest year to win," he said. "I thought we had a much better chance. But now that injuries have hampered us and other teams have produced better runners, it's going to be really close." He thinks his team's depth betters the team's chances of doing so.

Todd (Foren), Mitch (Erickson) and Tim (Kava) are all running spectacular and every meet they've ran they've gotten better and better," he said. "And once (Eric) Walle gets back to the spot where he's supposed to be, and I think he will, we're gonna have a pretty solid top seven guys."

As for Ritzenhein, Toloff's probably the only runner who can

challenge him for a state title.

"I think he's definitely capable of beating Dathan," Smith said of his superstar. "He's been running unchallenged all year. The numbers are showing it. If you're running under 15 minutes, you can beat anybody."

Toloff has confidence in his abilities, but won't say whether or not he can beat his Rockford Nemesis.

"He's got a lot of guts in him and it's going to be extremely tough racing with him," Toloff said of Ritzenhein. "I'm not gonna say I can or can't beat Dathan, but I'm gonna give him a good race."

"I know the pace is going to be fast, especially the first mile. I've just got to go out there and focus my mind on the race, focus on him and believe in myself."

Jason Schmitt is the sports editor for the Northville Record and the Novi News. He can be reached via e-mail at jschmitt@ht.homecom.net

Cross Country: Boys

Novi peaking at right time

By Bev Eckman
The Detroit News

The No. 2-ranked Novi Wildcats went to Midland for their Division 1 regional, up against three other ranked teams.

They scored 30 and came home winners, indicating again Coach Bob Smith has his team peaking right on time for the state meet Saturday at Michigan International Speedway.

Novi is going for its third consecutive title. Highland Milford (80) and White Lake Lakeland (92) also qualified.

Leading for Novi were senior Chris Toloff, who won in 15:10.5; junior Tim Moore, second in 15:13.7; and senior Mark Avenius, fourth in 15:52.7.

"We're right on track, our guys are really coming together," Toloff said this week. "We do a good job of supporting each other and setting high expectations for each other. If we can accomplish our goals, we can come out on top."

Pat Klein led White Lake Lakeland (third in 15:49.8), and Nicholas Kopczyk was best for Highland Milford (No. 5 in 16:09.4).

Novi's Wildcats — and the rest of the field — probably will be chasing Rockford senior Dathan Ritzenhein, the defending champion and the fastest high school distance runner in the country.

He ran 14:13 in June at an Olympic Trials qualifier at Plymouth Canton and narrowly missed qualifying against elite runners. He was the only high school athlete in the race.

Ritzenhein has verbally committed to Colorado.

"I'm really excited," he said about the state meet. "Individually, I'm a lot faster than I was last year, and I think this is the best team we've had yet."

Ritzenhein ran a course-record 14:18 at the Division 1 regional at Grand Rapids Christian.

Cross-country finals

What: Eight races in four divisions for teams and individuals.

Where: Michigan International Speedway, Brooklyn.

When: Saturday. Girls Division 3, 10 a.m.; Girls Division 4, 10:30 a.m.; Boys Division 3, 11 a.m.; Boys Division 4, 11:30 a.m.; Girls Division 2, 1:30 p.m.; Girls Division 1, 2 p.m.; Boys Division 2, 2:30 p.m.; Boys Division 1, 3 p.m.

Admission/Parking: \$5

Bev Eckman

Novi boy's win regional, advance to states Saturday

By JASON SCHMITT

Sports Editor

If last Saturday's regional results are any indication of whether Novi's trend of peaking at the right time will continue at the state meet two days from now, Wildcat fans could be looking at a three peat.

Novi looked better than it has all season, winning the Midland Regional No. 7 title easily, amassing just 30 points and joining Milford and Lakeland as those teams who will advance to the state meet Saturday at Michigan International Speedway.

The 'Cats dominated the field, placing all seven of its runners in the top 19 in the race. Milford was runnerup with 80 points and Lakeland also advanced with 92 points. Northville, who finished with total of 92 points, was fourth and just missed qualifying. Pinckney (140,) South Lyon (161,) Walled Lake Western (195,) Brighton (216,) Hartland (222) and Howell (226) rounded out the top 10.

Senior Chris Toloff was the regional champion, finishing in a time of 15:10. He led the race from start to finish and remained undefeated in invitationals this season.

His teammate, Tim Moore, stepped it up and ran as good as he has all year long. The junior was runnerup in 15:13.

"Right now I think Tim's stepping it up for

Boys' Cross Country

us," coach Bob Smith said. "I've said it from the beginning that he's going to be right up there at the front this weekend at states. He's arrived."

Senior Mark Avenius continued to prove he'll be up there at the state meet, finishing fourth at the regional behind Toloff, Moore and Lakeland's Pat Klein. Avenius broke 16 minutes, running a 15:52.

"He stayed with Klein the whole way, in fact, he and Pat traded places a few times in the race," his coach said. "It's a nice barometer for him and helps with his confidence."

Klein was fifth at the state meet a year ago.

Novi's strength continued as its next four runners finished in a 13-second pack. Tim Kava was 10th overall in 16:24, while Mitch Erickson (13th in 16:25,) Todd Foren (16th in 16:28) and Eric Walle (19th in 16:35) rounded out Novi's seven.

"We're not the same team we were at Gabriel Richard a few weeks ago," Smith said. "We're much better. We looked really, really crisp

Continued on 2

Novi hopes to defend title

Continued from 1

Saturday.

"I'm really proud of the kids. They did everything right, they stayed focused. That's one of our hallmarks. We're gonna be ready."

Smith said it was nice to have his team pack the way it did, something the last two state champion teams couldn't claim.

"Last year there was a lot of pressure on Nick Bassitt. Now we

have four bonafide fourth and fifth men," the coach said. "It's really gonna be good for us."

"There's no pecking order. None of the guys are afraid to pass another guy," he said.

Steve Szwast, Dan Stevens and Eric Saurer were the team's three alternates in case of injury, responsibilities the trio will again hold this weekend.

Novi will travel to Brooklyn tomorrow night in preparation for

Saturday's state final. The Division I boy's meet will begin at 3 p.m.

Novi and Rockford will once again be the two favored teams and should be challenged by Detroit Catholic Central and Saline. Rockford won its regional as well, led by sensation Dathan Ritzenheim, who won the race in a course-record time of 14:18. Three other Ram runners eclipsed 16 minutes and the team accumulated just 19 team points.

JV BOYS TAKE 2ND

Even without the team's next three best runners taking part in the junior varsity regional race, the Wildcats finished a very respectable second to Detroit Catholic Central.

Matt Harsha-Strong took second overall in the race, finishing in 18:07. He was followed closely by Steve Duda, who was third in 18:10. Eric Joseph (18:29) was ninth, Arne Meyer (18:31) 10th and Derek BuWalda (19:10) 29th to round out the team scoring: Ryan Slater (32nd) and Scott Bergeson (35th) rounded out the team's top seven.

"I may have been overly cautious, keeping three guys as alternates, but that was really gratifying to see the guys step it up the way they did," Smith said. "The whole JV team for us looked like the varsity team. They prepared the way they were supposed to, just like clockwork. I was busy running around and when I went to look for them they were already gone, warming up."

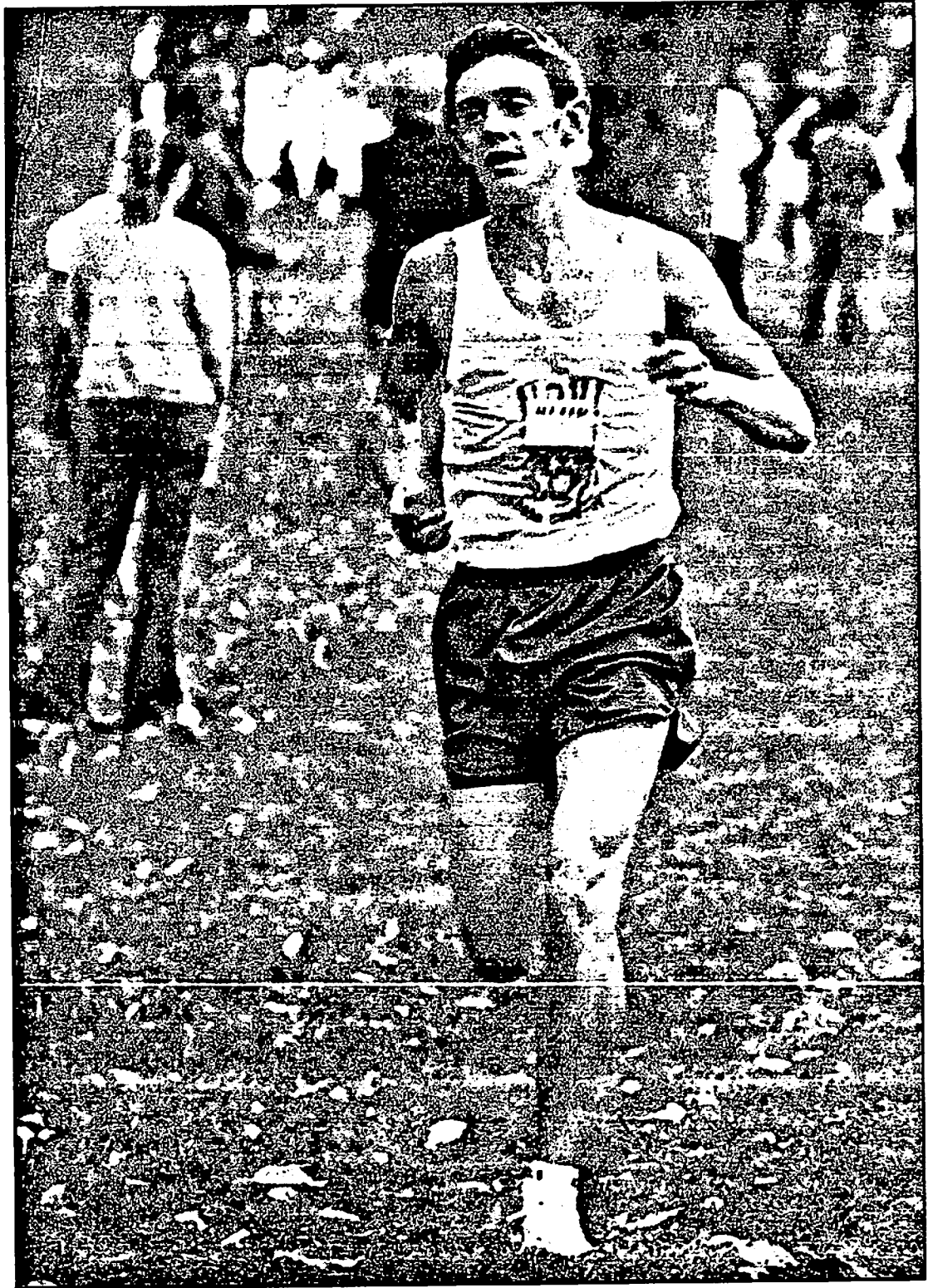


Photo by JOHN HEIDER

Novi senior Chris Toloff has taken Novi cross country to new heights this season.

Making a name for himself

By JASON SCHMITT
Sports Editor

For Chris Toloff, Saturday's state final is not just a chance for his team to become the first team since Lansing Eastern in 1957 to threepeat as state champions in Division I or Class A.

It's a chance for the senior to stake his claim as one of the best cross country runners the state has ever seen. Rockford senior Dathan Ritzenhein solidified his position as perhaps the best distance runner (cross country or track) that the state has ever had after winning both state and national cross country titles last year along with

track titles in the mile and two mile.

On Saturday Toloff will try to vault his name into the headlines alongside Ritzenhein's.

Ritzenhein was the state runnerup in 1998 to teammate Jason Hartmann and won the title a year ago. Toloff was 29th as sophomore and improved to seventh last season.

"I felt I didn't run well my sophomore season and last year I had some injuries that took away from my season," Toloff said. "I know I have the ability to be one of the best.

Continued on 4

Toloff sets sights on a title, Ritzenhein

Continued from 1

as long as I put in my hard work."

It's that hard work that has Toloff sitting right behind Ritzenhein in the latest individual rankings by John Bishop of the Michigan High School Track and Cross Country website.

Toloff ran upwards of 700 miles this summer and his times have reflected that hard work. Toloff is undefeated in invitationals this season and has broken shattered course records at Kensington Metropark, Lakeland's high school course as well as at Hudson Mills. He set the school record at Cass Benton.

"I'm confident he could have broken more if we'd have turned him loose," his coach Bob Smith said. "I talk to him almost daily about his workouts. He knows when to train and he knows what he needs to do."

Smith talked of a practice where the team was running repeat 400s on the high school track.

"We were running four in a row and took five minute breaks between sets," Smith explained.

Smith said Toloff came up to him during one of the breaks and said five minutes was too long of a break.

"So I told him to go run bleacher creatures," the coach said.

And he did.

Soon after Tim Moore followed him up the bleachers, and then Mark Aventus was in the

mix. All three are expected to place among the top 10 runners at the state meet.

"When you're so determined to do something, you want to go out and do it," Toloff said. "Because you know it's gonna make you better."

Toloff said his training has become more and more intense these past two years because of his passion on the track. He was runnerup to Ritzenhein in the mile run last year, running the third-fastest high-school time ever in the state of Michigan. His 4:10.77 was third only to Ritzenhein's 4:08.08 and John Hughes' 1999 time of 4:10.45.

"My goal was to run a 4:10," the senior captain of the cross-country team said. "I thought it was realistic. I definitely thought I could beat John Hughes (3rd in the race) and I wanted to be close to, if not beat Dathan."

Toloff is not concerned solely on his own feats and goals, he's one of the leaders of a team which will battle it out with Rockford and Detroit Catholic Central for the state title. He's confident his team can win its third-straight title.

"Coming into this year we thought this was going to be the easiest year to win," he said. "I thought we had a much better chance. But now that injuries have hampered us and other teams have produced better runners, it's going to be really close."

He thinks his team's depth betters the team's

chances of doing so.

Todd (Foren), Mitch (Erickson) and Tim (Kava) are all running spectacular and every meet they've ran they've gotten better and better," he said. "And once (Eric) Walle gets back to the spot where he's supposed to be, and I think he will, we're gonna have a pretty solid top seven guys."

As for Ritzenhein, Toloff's probably the only runner who can challenge him for a state title.

"I think he's definitely capable of beating Dathan," Smith said of his superstar. "He's been running and challenged all year. The numbers are showing it. If you're running under 15 minutes, you can beat anybody."

Toloff has confidence in his abilities, but won't say whether or not he can beat his Rockford Nemesis.

"He's got a lot of guts in him and it's going to be extremely tough racing with him," Toloff said of Ritzenhein. "I'm not gonna say I can or can't beat Dathan, but I'm gonna give him a good race."

"I know the pace is going to be fast, especially the first mile. I've just got to go out there and focus my mind on the race, focus on him and believe in myself."

Jason Schmitt is the sports editor for the Northville Record and the Novi News. He can be reached via e-mail at jjschmitt@ht.homecomm.net

The way I see it happening

If, by the time you finish reading this column, you feel the urge to groan and grunt about what I've had to say. Hold on a second.



Jason Schmitt

Everyone's entitled to an opinion, and it just so happens that I'm the sports editor for this wonderful HomeTown newspaper located in the ever-popular town of Novi. I figured, if I can predict the score of the Northville/Novi football game this Friday night, why not

take a stab at who will win the boy's state cross country championship this weekend in Brooklyn.

I mean, I think on paper I know just about as much about the cross-country finals as I do about the Novi offensive line or secondary. In fact, I think I'm more knowledgeable about the team's two-time defending state championship program. No offense, but these guys are fun to watch.

In each of the last two seasons, Novi was the second-best team coming into the final weekend of the season. But in each of those two seasons, the team has emerged as the states' best. I don't know what it is, but whatever Bob Smith is telling these kids the night before the meet is working. I don't see any of them driving Ferrari's around, so I think we're okay there.

Rockford has been the state's best program the last three years, at least that's what many people think. But why is it that the Rams are the ones taking a step off the awards platform moments before the Wildcats assume their position as the state's best? Numbers don't lie do they?

Sometimes they do, and guys like Nick

Bassitt and Mike Burns can make all the difference. This year the team doesn't have a number five guy. It has four number fours. That's where I feel this team separates itself from the last two champions.

Two years ago Novi had Kevin Avenius and Dan Christopherson both finish in the top 10. Last year Tim Moore (3rd) and Chris Toloff (7th) both placed among the state's elite.

This year Novi has three legitimate top-10 contenders. But I think the team's strength lays with its 4-7 runners. I've seen Todd Foren, Tim Kava and Mitch Erickson jockey for position all year. I've seen Eric Walle make continual strides to get back to where he once was.

I see four guys who can medal at the state meet (top 30.) I see four guys who may even be able to earn all-state honors (top 25.) Can anyone else in the state match that? I don't think so.

Rockford's the only team I feel can beat Novi, and to do that it'll have to run its best race of

the season.

Dathan Ritzenhein is the most accomplished runner the state's ever seen, having won the mile and two mile runs nationally while taking home the Footlocker national title last year as a junior.

He has a trio of fellow seniors backing him up. Joe Swendrowski has picked it up and assumed the No. 2 position on the team, but can be beaten on any given day by Kyle Fujimoto. Brian Smith is on par with these two. The biggest drop off on the team comes with its fifth man. Phil Astras is a good 30 seconds behind Smith and that could be the difference in the meet.

Adam Druckenmiller and B.J. Meyers are even further back and won't come into play.

Rockford is rock solid all the way through, however as I stated above, I think the difference is in the fifth man. Looking up and down the lineup, I see only two positions where Rockford may beat Novi.

Ritzenhein is the favorite over Toloff, but will gain only one point in the team race. And Rockford's fourth runner (I believe it will be Smith or Fujimoto) will gain minimal points on Novi's fourth man (Walle or Erickson, possibly Kava.)

In the end, I think you'll be talking about the points Tim Moore gains on Joe Swendrowski, the points Avenius chalks up on Fujimoto or Smith and the points Novi's fifth man (again Kava, Erickson or Walle) gain on Astras. Another important factor is to watch for Foren, Kava Erickson or Walle to gain valuable points pushing Rockford's fifth man behind all of them.

I'm not a gambler, but if I were to wager a Coca Cola on the final outcome of the state meet, it would be.....Novi 49, Rockford 62.

Jason Schmitt is the sports editor for the Novi News. He can be reached via e-mail at jschmitt@ht.homecomm.net

JASON SCHMITT'S X-C PREDICTIONS			
NOVI		ROCKFORD	
Place	Runner	Place	Runner
2nd	Chris Toloff	1st	Dathan Ritzenhein
3rd	Tim Moore	12th	Joe Swendrowski
6th	Mark Avenius	14th	Kyle Fujimoto
23rd	Eric Walle	19th	Brian Smith
24th	Tim Kava	35th	Phil Astras
26th	Mitch Erickson	38th	A. Druckenmiller
31st	Todd Foren	61st	BJ Meyers
Team Total	60	Team Total	81
Team Score	49	Team Score	62

Boyles makes it four; Novi falls

■ Adams senior becomes first to win four consecutive Division 1 individual crowns

By MARVIN GOODWIN
Of The Oakland Press

BROOKLYN, Mich. — With three cross country state titles in her possession, Katie Boyles of Rochester Adams was already in elite company.

But the senior took her running to another level Saturday as she became the first athlete to win four straight Division 1 cross country state titles at the MHSAA championships at Michigan International Speedway.

Boyles sped over the 5,000-meter course in 17:17.4, setting a personal best and course record. Teammate Shannon Stanley came in a surprising second with a time of 17:31, also a personal best as Adams came in fifth with 242 points.

Rockford won its third straight girls Division 1 title with 35 points. Milford came in second with 112 and Troy was third with 232.

When Boyles came into view at the huge complex, fans recognized that this was the same runner who had won the previous years, and the applause began, reaching a crescendo as she crossed the line.

"I didn't know what to do, whether to laugh or cry," Boyles said. "I was completely exhausted. It was such an amazing accomplishment for me. I'm just in awe at what's happened."

Boyles followed a familiar formula. She let others take the lead, remained calm and then pounced on them at the end.

"The race I ran today was the same race I ran for the last four years," Boyles said. "It was just concentrating on staying with them (leaders) and I was hitting the times that I wanted to hit. With about 400 (meters) to go, I just took off."

She made an occasional peak over her shoulder to see where the others were, then struggled to the finish line.

"I felt terrible, I felt like I was going to keel over and die," she said. "I really put everything I had into this race today."

Meanwhile, Rockford's boys, led by two-time state champion Dathan Ritzenheim, kept Novi from winning a third straight Division 1 state championship as the Rams took the crown with 56 points. Novi was second with 89 and Redford-Detroit Catholic Central was third with 100.

Ritzenheim, a national high school cross country champion, leveled the competition, blazing to a course-record



Oakland Press file photo/BRANDY BAKER

Katie Boyles (left) received a hug from her mother Audrey following the county meet

14:10.4, nearly a minute faster than his winning time last year. Novi's Chris Toloff was second and teammate Tim Moore was third.

It was Novi's first loss of the season. Toloff entertained thoughts of running with Ritzenheim. He stayed with him for nearly 800 meters, but Ritzenheim was too formidable.

"Dathan kind of pulled away from me ... and I got really discouraged," Toloff said. "The whole race I was mentally down. It was hard running by myself. I just got mentally down ... and I just wanted to finish. But I did OK."

"The kids are kind of disappointed," Novi coach Robert Smith said. "They didn't want anything other than first place. We are a great team, but they (Rockford) were better."

Lakeland's Pat Klein took fourth (15:15), leading the Eagles to seventh with 243 points. Milford's Nick Kopczyk was 14th as the Redskins were fifth with 229 points.

In the Division 2 boys race, Andrew Bauer of Bloomfield Hills Lahser placed fifth in 15:37.9 and Ben Salvette of Bloomfield Hills Cranbrook Kingswood was ninth in 15:54.

In the Division 2 girls race, Rebecca Walter of Birmingham Groves boldly went out with the leaders and held on to finish fifth in 18:44. Birmingham Seaholm's Lindsay Mosher was 14th in 19:09 and Jennifer Waters of Birmingham Marian was 16th in 19:12. Pontiac Notre Dame Prep's Megan Schneider was 31st.

Bloomfield Hills Lahser's Andrew Bauer lowered his best time by 20 seconds, finishing fifth in 15:37.9 for a school record.

"At the beginning of the season I was going for top 10," he said, "then after regionals (he won), I was going for top five. It was a perfect day to run."

Farmington's boys, led by Pat Lockhart's 44th place, finished ninth with 330 points.

Boys: Finals

Winner leads Rockford to title

By Bev Eckman
The Detroit News

BROOKLYN, Mich. — Rockford senior Dathan Ritzenheim added a record to his collection Saturday in the Michigan cross-country finals.

Ritzenheim ran a course-record 14:10.40 for the 3.1-mile (5K) course, which starts on the auto track, goes out on a trail, and returns to the auto track for the finish.

Led by Ritzenheim, Rockford ended Novi's two-year reign as champion of Class A, now Division 1. Rockford won with 56, Novi was second with 89 and Detroit Catholic Central third with 100.

Novi senior Chris Toloff finished second in 15:05.30 and Novi junior Tim Moore third in 15:06.10.

"I went after Dathan, but he kind of pulled away from me," Toloff said. "We got second, and that's not too bad compared to that Rockford team. They are a great bunch of guys and they deserve it."

Rockford Coach Mark Nessner called the victory, after three second-place finishes, "such a relief."

He will have to rebuild after graduating seven seniors in June. Ritzenheim has committed to the University of Colorado.

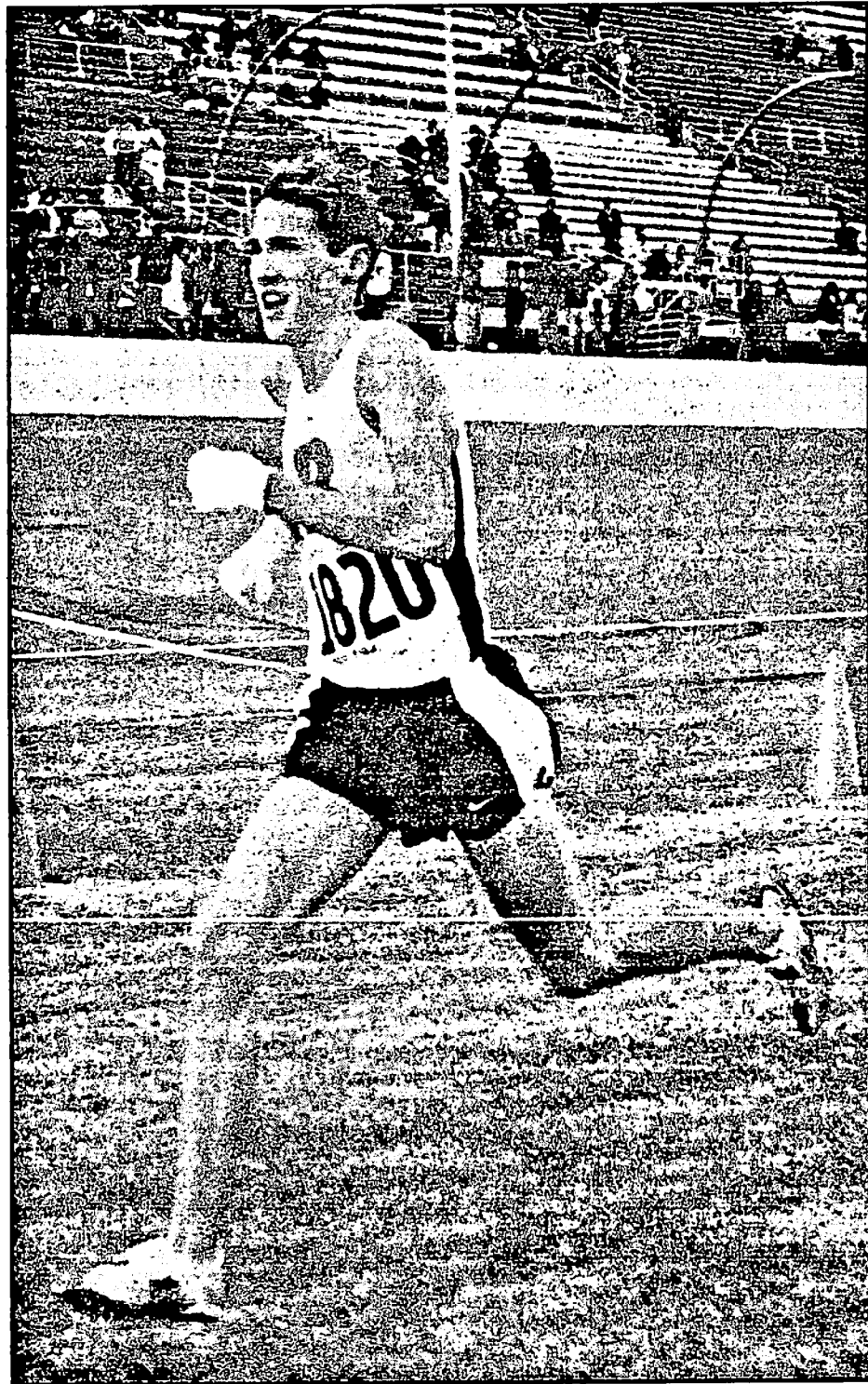
"It's a great way to go out after four years," he said.



Ron Leitfeld

Dathan Ritzenheim set a course record of 14:10.4 and led Rockford to the Division 1 team title.

BOYS
DIVISION 1
TEAMS: 1. Rockford, 56; 2. Novi, 89; 3. Detroit Catholic Central, 100; 4. Saline, 221; 5. Highland Millford, 229; 6. Traverse City Central, 242; 7. White Lake Lakeland, 243; 8. Portage Northern, 267; 9. Grand Blanc, 324; 10. Lake Orion, 336; 11. Traverse City West, 353; 12. Grand Ledge, 354; 13. Temperance Bedford, 414; 14. Sterling Heights, 416; 15. Grosse Pointe South, 420; 16. Okemos, 436; 17. Ann Arbor Pioneer, 440; 18. Livonia Stevenson, 441; 19. Birmingham Brother Rice, 483; 20. Dearborn, 496; 21. Detroit U-D Jesuit, 518; 22. Warren DeLaSalle, 533; 23. Clarkston, 539; 24. Zeeland, 550; 25. Grand Rapids Union, 558; 26. Troy, 568; 27. Utica Eisenhower, 607.
INDIVIDUALS: 1. Dathan Ritzenheim, Rockford, 14:10.40; 2. Chris Toloff, Novi, 15:05.30; 3. Tim Moore, Novi, 15:06.10; 4. Pat Klein, White Lake Lakeland, 15:15.00; 5. Brian Smith, Rockford, 15:20.60; 6. Matt Daly, Detroit Catholic Central, 15:22.50; 7. Joe Swendrowski, Rockford, 15:23.40; 8. Kyle Fujimoto, Rockford, 15:27.10; 9. Sean Moore, Saline, 15:30.10; 10. Blake Terhune, Traverse City Central, 15:33.90; 11. Jon Wojcik, Wyandotte Roosevelt, 15:35.60; 12. Ed Davis, Saline, 15:38.50; 13. Jason Prowant, Muskegon Reeds-Puffer, 15:43.30; 14. Nicholas Koczyk, Highland Millford, 15:46.00; 15. John Krawiec, Detroit Catholic Central, 15:46.60; 16. Joseph Whitman, Davison, 15:47.10; 17. Donnie Warner, Plymouth, 15:47.40; 18. Matt French, Howell, 15:47.60; 19. Dana Jurs, Okemos, 15:49.90; 20. Adam Frezza, Lake Orion, 15:51.10.



To the left, the entire Novi boy's team takes off from the starting box at last Saturday's state final at Michigan International Speedway. The Wildcats finished second in their attempt to three-peat as state champions. Chris Toloff and Tim Moore disappointed no one by taking sec-

ond and third individually. Dathan Ritzenhein, above, also surprised no one after winning his second-consecutive state championship in leading his Rockford to its first-ever team title. Ritzenhein set the course record in a time of 14:10.4.

Toloff, Moore go 2-3, Novi takes 2nd overall

By JASON SCHMITT
Sports Editor

As anticipated, the Michigan High School Athletic Association state cross country final was a two-team meet this past Saturday.

But contrary to some beliefs, one team ran away with its first-ever boy's team title after placing four runners among the top eight.

Rockford shocked the field, including two-time defending state champion Novi, by taking home the team title with 56 team points. Novi was runnerup with 89.

"They really were amazing," Novi coach Bob Smith said. "You can trick yourself by saying they ran on an easy home course all year long, but I figured they had to be for real. They were definitely ready, they were due."

Rockford senior Dathan Ritzenheim cruised to a record-breaking victory individually, crossing the finish line in an amazing time of 14:10.4. The time shattered former teammate Jason Hartmann's Michigan International Speedway record by 41 seconds. It was his second-straight state title.

As expected, Novi had the next two best runners in the race. Senior Chris Toloff and junior Tim Moore finished a second apart for second and third. Toloff bettered his regional time by five seconds and became the highest-finishing individual runner Novi's ever had. His time (15:05.3) was a career-

best excluding the shortened Cass Benton course at the Shamrock Invitational earlier this year.

Moore finished third for the second-straight year and medaled for the third-straight time. His time of 15:06.1 was a personal best on any course for the junior. He ran alongside Toloff for much of the race, but fell behind in the last 100 yards.

"I went out a little harder than expected, but in the end I expected to run a 15:05," he said following the race. "I wasn't paying attention to my own finish right after the race, I was really pulling for the team at that point."

It didn't matter how much pulling Moore could do, Rockford was primed for the race of its season. A trio of seniors finished fifth, seventh and eighth to all but assure the Rams of their first state championship.

Smith said he expected Rockford's threesome (Brian Smith, Joe Swendrowski and Kyle Fujimoto) to better their races from a year ago, but not by that much.

"No, I didn't expect them to finish that high," he said. "I really didn't think they'd have four guys in the top 10."

Novi's Mark Avenius was the next Wildcat to cross the finish line. The senior took 22nd overall to earn his second-straight all-state accolade.

Tim Kava and Eric Walle finished back to back at 48th and 49th, but Rockford's Phil Astras kept pace with the Novi duo and took 50th to secure the win for his team. Kava, running in his first state final, finished in a time of 16:14. Walle, who battled back from a heel injury early in the season, bettered his 1999 time by a second, but dropped 27 positions in the race.

"I'm hard pressed to find a reason for the times coming down the way they did," Smith said. "I think we all ran about as good as we have all year long. When we looked back at the guys who would be coming back from last year's final, there weren't a lot of guys who we felt would jump ahead of us."

But that's exactly what happened. Thirty runners eclipsed the 16-minute barrier at this year's final. Only 11 did last year, where the conditions were comparable to this year's.

Juniors Todd Foren and Mitch Erickson rounded out the Novi

seven. Foren, also running in his first state final, was 86th overall in 16:29. Erickson, a member of last year's state title winner, improved on his time by a minute in finishing 109th in 16:36.

Detroit Catholic Central was third as a team with 100 points and Saline (221) and fellow Kensington Valley Conference foe Milford (229) rounded out the top five. Another KVC team, Lakeland, returned to the top 10 with a seventh-place finish.

"The kids are a little disappointed. To tell you the truth, they didn't want anything but first place," Smith said. "For a lot of these kids, winning is all they've known. But what they have to realize is they really accomplished something big. They gave it their best efforts and you can't ask for anything more than that."

The league was not only represented on a team level, but individ-

ually the conference asserted itself as the best in the state.

Lakeland's Pat Klein followed Toloff and Moore to across the finish line for a fourth-place finish. Milford's Nick Kopczyk was 12th overall and along with Avenius, Howell's Matt French (18th) was yet another all-state honoree. Brighton's Kevin Gienapp finished 26th overall to medal and Lakeland's Brian Theut (31st) was just out of the running for a medal.

AMONG THE STATES BEST

Once again, the Kensington Valley Conference was well represented with five all-state runners, including three of the top four in the state.

Place	Runner	School
1	D. Ritzenheim	Rockford
2	Chris Toloff	Novi
3	Tim Moore	Novi
4	Pat Klein	Lakeland
5	Brian Smith	Rockford
6	Matt Daly	DCC
7	J. Swendrowski	Rockford
8	Kyle Fujimoto	Rockford
9	Sean Moore	Saline
10	Blake Terhune	TCC

CC teams looking to 2001

By MARVIN GOODWIN
Of The Oakland Press

Although Oakland County's string of four straight boys state cross country titles was snapped Saturday at Michigan International Speedway, area school's will be gearing up for another solid effort next season.

Novi had won the previous two state titles but finished second to Rockford. Lakeland had won state titles in 1996-97.

"We're going to be right back," said Novi coach Robert Smith, noting that Catholic Central, which took second, and Rockford had senior-dominated lineups.

With Novi taking second, Milford fifth, Lakeland seventh and Lake Orion 10th, Oakland County had four finishing teams among the top 10 at state.

Adam Frezza led Lake Orion with his 20th place finish, clocking 15:51 as those willing to run blazed the course, many with career best efforts. Novi's Mark Avenius (15:53), Rochester's Chris Gumz (15:56) joined Novi's Chris Toloff and Tim Moore, and Lakeland's Pat Klein as area runners who broke 16 minutes.

Lakeland's Brian Theut barely missed breaking 16 minutes with his 16:00.4 effort for 31st place.

Milford, led by Nick Kopczyk, will have much of its boys team returning as the Redskins can anticipate another solid season.

■ With a time of 16:47 for 71st place, Oxford's Donnie Richmond was the third highest finishing freshman in the Division 2 race. Some 230 runners participated in each race.

■ In the girls Division 1 race, Milford's Lisa Canty, who placed 12th overall in 18:29, was the third highest finishing freshman. Troy Athens' Theresa Martin, 20th in 18:45, was the fifth highest finishing freshman.



KVC shows it's a force to be reckoned with

By MARVIN GOODWIN
Of The Oakland Press

By just one place, Oakland County missed winning five straight Division 1 state championships. Novi, the two-time defending champion, placed second behind Rockford. But the area maintained its traditional strength in the sport as three runners — each from the Kensington Valley Conference — placed among the top four finishers.

■ **Chris Toloff, Novi** — The senior captured KVC, regional and Oakland County meet crowns during a solid season. Toloff set several course records and was a key factor in the Wildcats' last two state championships. Only a super effort by perhaps the top prep cross country runner in the nation kept him from being unbeaten as he took second in the Division 1 state meet.

■ **Tim Moore, Novi** — The junior

often pushed Toloff during races. He was KVC, regional and Oakland County meet runner-up and took third at the Division 1 state meet. He's a two-time All-State runner who'll be one of the meet favorites at state next year.

■ **Pat Klein, Lakeland** — The bigger the race, the more the senior was inspired. He won the Oxford Invitational, was fifth at the Oakland County meet, third at the KVC meet, and third at regional before taking fourth at the Division 1 state meet.

■ **Nick Kopyzyk, Milford** — A junior, Kopyzyk's 14th-place finish gave the KVC the top four finishers among Oakland County runners. He finished seventh at the KVC meet, eighth at Oakland County and fifth at the Midland regional.

■ **Adam Frezza, Lake Orion** — Frezza was consistent much of the season, winning OAA I and regional titles. The senior was sixth at the Holly Invitational, sixth at the Oakland County meet, fourth at the Oxford Invitational and third at the Ambrose Invitational before taking 20th at the

Division 1 state meet.

■ **Mark Avenius, Novi** — Just like teammates Moore and Toloff, Avenius has been a member of two state champion teams and one state runner-up squad. He was third at Oakland County meet and fourth at the KVC and regional meets.

■ **Chris Gumz, Rochester** — Gumz started slowly but as he did last season, came on strong at the end of the season. The senior was OAA I runner-up, seventh at the Oxford Invitational, third at the Holly regional and was among the leaders at the Ambrose (fifth) and West Bloomfield (seventh) Invitationals. He placed 24th at the Division 1 state meet.

■ **Andrew Bauer, Bloomfield Hills** — The junior made a quantum leap from his sophomore year as he evolved into one of the state's leading runners. He won West Bloomfield, Brother Rice, Spartan and Ambrose Invitational titles in addition to OAA II and regional crowns. He was second at the Oxford Invitational and he placed fifth at the Division 2 state meet.

■ **Ben Salvette, Cranbrook-Kingswood** — He led the Cranes to one of their better seasons. The junior was 12th at the Oakland County meet, second at his regional, third at the Oxford Invitational and finished 10th at the Division 2 state meet.

■ **Brian Theut, Lakeland** — A junior, Theut was 10th at the Oakland County meet, fifth at the Oxford Invitational, sixth at the KVC meet, eighth at the Midland regional and 31st at the Division 1 state meet.

■ **Coach of the Year** — Only an inspired effort from Rockford kept Novi coach Robert Smith and the Wildcats from winning three straight state championships. As it was, Novi settled for second place, still a notable performance.

"This was the best team we've ever had," said Smith, comparing the times at state to past Wildcat teams. "We all ran real fast times. You can't ask for more than that." More can be expected next year as only three of the top seven runners graduate. "We're going to be right back in it (next year)," he said.

2000 Boys All-County Cross Country

Name	School	Year	State Time
Chris Toloff	Novi	Sr.	15:05.3
Tim Moore	Novi	Jr.	15:06.1
Pat Klein	Lakeland	Sr.	15:15.8
Mark Avenius	Novi	Sr.	15:33.5
Andrew Bauer	Lahser	Jr.	15:37.9
Nick Kopyzyk	Milford	Jr.	15:46.0
Adam Frezza	Lake Orion	Sr.	15:51.1
Ben Salvette	Cran-King	Jr.	15:54.9
Chris Gumz	Rochester	Sr.	15:58.4
Brian Theut	Lakeland	Jr.	16:00.4

Second Team			
Name	School	Year	State Time
Kevin Naughton	WL Western	Jr.	16:04.8
Nick Gillett	Troy	Jr.	16:06.2
Patrick Mber	Milford	Soph.	16:07
Michael Cott	Lake Orion	Jr.	16:11.3
Tim Kava	Novi	Soph.	16:14.6
Eric Walle	Novi	Sr.	16:14.7
Dan Murray	Brother Rice	Jr.	16:15.6
Steve Smith	Brother Rice	Sr.	16:16.5
Justin Dew	Lake Orion	Jr.	16:24.9
C.J. Hadding	Lakeland	Sr.	16:25.3

Honorable mention: Mike Barton (Seaholm); Dan DeRossa (Milford); Todd Foren (Novi); Stephen Smith (Groves); Chris Welch (Lakeland).

2000 All-Metro County Team

BOYS

Mark Avenius, sr., Novi Finished third in Division 1 at states in 1999, ran 1999 at regionals. He won duals with Pinckney (1630) and Hartland (1630) and was fourth in the Gabriel Richard Invitational in 1999. "His times show he's a big meet runner; he has the ability to rise to the occasion when the team needs him," said Coach Robert Smith. "He's been all-state the last two seasons." He was third in the Oakland County Meet in 1632, fourth in the Kennington Valley Conference in 1637. Notre Dame and Aquinas College (Grand Rapids) are interested.

Andrew Bauer, Jr., Bloomfield Hills Lakes Finished fifth in Division 2 in 1997, a personal and school record. He was first in the Brother Rice/West Bloomfield Invitational in 1631, first in the Spartan Invitational in 1628.9, first in the Ambrose Invitational in 1637.8, and fourth in Oakland County in 1637.8. He was second at Oxford, 1603.7; first in the Oakland Activities Association Division 2 in 1625.8; and first at regionals 1577.0. "He worked hard all summer putting in base mileage so when it came to the end of the season and the bigger meets, he was able to handle the speed works and drop his time," said Coach Nick Stratton.

Matt Daly, sr., Detroit Catholic Central Finished sixth in Division 1 in 1992, a personal best. He was 4-0 in duals, Catholic League A-B Division champion and regional champion. He won the West Bloomfield Invitational, the Hazlett Invitational and the Sturgis Invitational and was Friendship Meet Champion. William & Mary and Notre Dame are interested. "He just focuses from the beginning of the race to the end," said Coach Tony Magni. "He is a very accomplished runner; there's no wasted motion as he's running. His mind is more focused on the team's outcome than his individual accomplishments. He's been a true leader throughout the season, last year and this year."

Pat Klein, sr., White Lake Lakeside Finished fourth in Division 1 in 1995, a personal record. He won the Oxford Invitational in 1996, was fourth at the Brother Rice/West Bloomfield Invitational in 1643, and second at the Jackson Invitational in 1619. He was 7-1 in duals, losing only to Novi, third in the Kennington Valley Conference in 1621, fifth in the Oakland County meet in 1642 and third in his regional in 1949. "He's got a lot of talent and a real big heart, he's a tremendous competitor," said Coach Randy Wilkins. "The way we train, he's very confident he'll be there at the end of the year." South Carolina, Tennessee, Minnesota and Michigan State are interested.

John Krawiec, Jr., Detroit Catholic Central Finished 12th in Division 1 in 1946, a personal record. He was second behind Daly in four duals. He was fifth at Holly and West Bloomfield, fourth at the Shamrock and at Hazellet and at Sturgis, and third in the Catholic League behind Daly and his brother, Dan Sewiec, but John beat Dan at Operation Friendship, finishing sec-

ond. He was fourth at regionals. "He's very consistent, he hasn't had a bad race all year," said Coach Tony Magni. "John would stay with the leaders through the race and try to out-kick as many of the leaders as possible, which is why he was never worse than fifth, except the state final. This was his first year on the varsity."

Sean Moore, sr., Sallies Finished ninth in Division 1 in a school-record 1930. "He had a career year," said Coach Tom Frederick. He won three Southeastern Conference jamborees and was the league champion in 1992. He won his division of Holly Invitational in 1613 and was second at Brother Rice/West Bloomfield in 1622 to Matt Daly. He won the Jackson Invitational (1604), Grosse Ile Invitational (1604), was second to Dathan Ritzenhein at the Portage Invitational in 1943 and was regional runner-up to Daly in 1996. "He has a real competitive spirit, he likes to go to the front and push the pace," said Frederick. "He doesn't like to lose, he spreads that to his teammates."

Tim Moore, Jr., Novi Finished third in Division 1 at states in 1906.10, a personal record. He has lost to only two runners all season, Rockford's Dathan Ritzenhein, who ran a course record 1410 at states, and teammate Chris Toloff. "Tim was our No. 1 man last year," Coach Robert Smith said. "When Toloff started this season on fire, Moore responded by working extremely hard to get back with his teammate and succeeded. He was second to Toloff at the Oakland County meet in 1938. He closed the gap to three seconds behind Toloff at regionals, running 1923, which was his personal record for a week. He was one second behind Toloff at MIS."

Patrick Roberts, sr., Treston Finished seventh in Division 2 in 1993.0 at his season best. He went 1993 last season. He was 7-1 in duals and repeated as Downriver (News Herald), regional and Mega Red champion. Western, Central and Eastern Michigan are interested. "He's an athlete and a competitor. He's smart, he's talented and he has leg speed," said Coach Nelson MacNicol. "He likes to run at the front. At the beginning of the season he had an emergency appendectomy. But he kept running and came back eight or nine days after surgery. You don't get a chance to coach too many kids like Patrick."

Chris Toloff, sr., Novi Finished second in Division 1 at the state final at Michigan International Speedway in 1905.90 to Mr. Cross Country, Rockford's Dathan Ritzenhein (course record 1410.40). "He's led every race this season from start to finish except that one," said Coach Robert Smith. He has Novi's course record, 1927 at Cass Benton Park in Northville. He won the Kennington Valley Conference in a course-record 1933. Oakland County (1939), and regional championship in 1910. "He loves to be a front runner, he takes charge of every race he's in," Smith said. Toloff has signed with Michigan State for cross country and track.

Coach of the Year: Robert Smith, Novi.



Avenius



Bauer



Daly



Klein



Krawiec



Sean Moore



Tim Moore



Roberts



Toloff



Bongiovanni



Boyles



Canty



Kinkela



Kramer



Parker



Schmidt



Stanley



Walter

GIRLS

Teresa Bongiovanni, Jr., Romeo Finished sixth in Division 1 in 1997.80, a personal and school record. Team undefeated in duals. She placed first in Macomb Area Conference league meet in 1816 and was league MVP. Won Macomb County meet in 1834. Second to Boyles at Holly regional in 1857. "She led us to a fourth-place finish in the state, our best ever, and we beat our county rival (Sterling Heights) Stevenson, which was eighth," said Coach Tim Probst. "Teresa was consistent and durable throughout the year. She likes to lead the race, most people, she literally ran away from them. She's been all-state two years."

Katie Boyles, sr., Rochester Adams Boyles won Division 1 this year and Class A the three previous years, making her the only runner in the top class/division to win four straight titles. She holds the course record at Michigan International Speedway, 1727, set this year. She won the Midwest Meet of Champions Nov. 18 in 1801. She won every meet she entered this season. "She's very coachable, she listens to what needs to be done and goes out and does it," said Coach Bud Ciacciarelli. "She doesn't like to lose. She runs very upright, very efficient, kind of reminds you of Michael Johnson (world record in the 1000 and 2000 meters). Katie is very strong, she weight trains basically all year. I will most certainly miss her." Ivies are among many interested.

Lisa Canty, fr., Highland Millford Finished 12th in Division 1 in 1829.90, a personal record. Finished second in every dual to teammate Katie Kramer, second in the Kennington Valley meet in 1937 and in the Northwood University regional in 1901. She was third at the Oakland County championship meet behind Rochester Adams Katie Boyles and Shannon Stanley in 1954. "She was Katie's shadow," said Coach Brian Salzer. "A testament to her accomplishment is that she broke all of our freshman records at Millford High School, which were held by Katie Kramer. There's a lot of fire, she's very aggressive, she's not afraid to go out and race."

Michelle Kinkela, sr., Sterling Heights Stevenson Finished 13th in Division 1 in 1832.70. Undefeated in duals all season. Qualified for the Nov 18 Midwest Meet of Champions in Dayton in 1901. Against seniors from six states, she finished 13th overall in 1830. She was seventh at Brother Rice/West Bloomfield Invitational. "Her dedication level will allow her to be successful at the next level, because she's not just relying on natural talent," said Coach Kevin Hanson. "She was varsity as a sophomore. She shows diligence through hard work year-around. She runs very hard through the middle stages. She enjoys mileage." Grand Valley, Wayne State and Central Michigan are interested.

Katie Kramer, sr., Highland Millford Finished seventh in Division 1 in 1811.60, a personal record and school record. Undefeated in dual meets. She was Kennington Valley Conference champion in 1924 at Kennington Metropark, regional champion in 1831 at Northwood University. "Making the transition from freshman to sophomore, one of the components was

increasing the intensity of her workouts, taking her training to a different level, was a big part of her success," said Coach Brian Salzer. "Her leadership was pivotal in the development of our younger runners, teaching them how to race. It's about pulling others along with you, which was essential to our state runner-up finish."

Krishawna Parker, Jr., Detroit Crockett Finished second in Division 3 in 1817.40, the only Detroit Public School League runner to make All-State — and the only PSL runner to qualify for states. She won the city championship at Belle Isle in 1917, the Operation Friendship meet in 2003 and every dual meet this season. She won the Elizabeth Park regional in 1948. "Her natural ability to run over all makes her good," said Coach LaCema Womack. "Krishawna has a steady style of running. She has learned pacing herself on her own to speed at certain points, relax at certain points, and maintain at certain points."

Catherine Schmidt, sr., Romeo Finished 17th in Division 1 in 1844.00, a personal record. Team undefeated in duals. Finished second in Macomb Area Conference league meet in 1927. Made All-Macomb County first team and All-Macomb Area Conference first team. Was Four years All-County Seventh at Holly regional in 2002. Three year Macomb County 800-meter champion. Missed states last season due to mononucleosis. "Catherine practices mind over matter, she's the big-game player and comes through in the clutch," said Coach Tim Probst. "She was our captain and kept our team focused going into the state meet." Notre Dame is interested.

Shannon Stanley, sr., Rochester Adams Finished second in Division 1 in 1973, her personal record. "She ran No. 2 to Boyles in almost every race," said Coach Bud Ciacciarelli. She was second at County 1962, second at the Oxford Invitational, 1973, second at the league (Oakland Activities Association Division 1) in 1973 and third at her regional, 1924. "She was about five steps back of Katie at the mile and a half, and Katie was three steps back of the front runners. She stayed there to the finish and caught them all in the last 400 meters. She kicked and started catching them, two in the last 90 meters. God gave her a gift called foot speed. She's very light on her feet, she's a strider, she seems to glide over the ground."

Rebecca Walter, Jr., Birmingham Groves Finished fifth in Division 2 in 1844.20 a personal record and school record. She was the highest Metro-area finisher. Undefeated in dual meets, she was the Oakland Activities Association Division 3 champion in 1934. She was the regional champion in 1838, and placed ninth in Oakland County in 1936. Finished seventh in Class A in the mile in 920. "She's an athlete, very competitive, and works harder than any young lady I've had in years," said Coach George Browne. "She's strong, she's 5-10 and 135 pounds. She can keep a pace where a lot of girls will fade after the first mile. She likes to go out front."

Coach of the Year: Bud Ciacciarelli, Rochester Adams

How we picked them

The Detroit News' 2000 All-Metro cross country teams were selected by sports writer Bev Eckman, in consultation with area and state coaches, runners and members of the Michigan Interscholastic Track Coaches Association.

Sports editor set to leave — Onward and Upward

Saying good-bye is never an easy thing to do.

Especially when that good bye means you'll never again work alongside the same people you've passed on the stairwell for all these years. You'll never again make that Sunday night call to your local cross-country coach. You'll never again sing a happy-birthday song at the top of the stairs to a fellow employee.

Saying good-bye is never a fun thing to do either.

But oftentimes, and in the case of this sportswriter, saying good-bye means moving

on up, and out into a world of dreams. It means that something good has come about, and you're not about to let it get away from you, not this time.

Too often we just sit back, relax, enjoy the scenery, miss opportunities, you know. It's too easy to do nothing.

I've recently accepted a sports writing position with the Royal Oak Daily Tribune and I'll make that last official trip upstairs, past my co-workers, who may very well be singing happy birthday at the time. My last day here at the Northville Record and Novi News will be Friday.

Everytime an employee leaves the editorial department here, he/she talks about how they'll miss everyone they've worked with. How they appreciate everything everyone's done for them over their time here at the paper.

Well I won't take a detour from that route, but I may jump up on the sidewalk or skip through a back yard along the way.

You see, I have had 40 months of pure joy here in the neighboring communities of Northville and Novi. When I accepted this job in August of 1997, I didn't know what I was walking into. I didn't know anything about metro-Detroit.

What I've learned over the past three-plus years is that these are the types of communities I want to be a part of, raise my kids in and pay my taxes into. I have enjoyed every minute I've spent here at the News and Record, and I've been spoiled too. Come on, six team state championships, several more individual titles. And this year Northville and Novi provided me with my first-ever football playoff wins!

So many things rambled through my mind as I began my last week of work here. I've reminisced about the good times, good people and good things that I've been fortunate to be around.

I've had some good experiences, some bad ones too. And I want to share a few of the

best times I've had here at the papers over the last three years.

The following lists are not designed to slight anyone or any team, but to point out who has been there for me thick and thin.

MOST OVERACHIEVING

TEAMS/INDIVIDUALS

Overachieving in my terms talks of an individual or team which wasn't expected to perform as well as it/he/she did. Again, these are team/individuals who surprised me over the years.

Novi wrestler Nick Slovan is one of my three finalists. The senior reached the state finals at 215 pounds last year, far surpassing any predictions/projections I may have had. He was a talented individual, but wrestled best when he had to. He nearly won the state title.

The 1999-2000 Novi hockey team

bounced back from a sub-par inaugural season to reach the state quarterfinals, where it lost to Okemos 2-1 in overtime. Once in the playoffs, the team didn't surprise me, but based on initial pre-season projections — WOW.

And let's not forget the Northville hockey team. I am not biased towards the men on the ice, but the 1997-98 team won a district championship in the program's first year. Talented individuals like Kevin Boone and Evan Edwards made that a year to remember.

MOST COORDINATED COACHES

I work with more than 40 coaches a year, contacting them at least once a week to get the latest results. Here are my three most coordinated coaches, in no particular order.

Novi cross country coach Bob Smith

Continued on 2



Jason Schmitt

Sports editor leaves paper for daily job

Continued from 1

sends me his information via e-mail each week, on a nicely-layed out spreadsheet document. He then talks with me regarding his kid's performances. Ever wonder why cross country gets good coverage???

: **Novi tennis coach Jim Hanson** makes things easier than they should be. Maybe it's the fact that he's established the program for the longest time that he's so organized. I don't know, but weekly results followed by a Monday morning (10-11 a.m.) phone call makes life easier for this reporter.

: **Pete Wright**, girls' basketball coach at Northville High School usually catches me off guard. That's because he's always on the ball and gets me more than enough information every week. Again, via the fax machine, the numbers are there, the time is saved and the girls are rewarded with weekly coverage, without a hitch.

QUOTABLE COACHES

Two things I need to make a story good — a pencil and a computer. Two things I need to make a story great — statistics and quotes. These are my three best quotable coaches. They usually give me more than I need, but that's exactly what I want.

Novi hockey coach **Dan Phelps** can't say enough good things about his team's efforts, game in and game out. And that's why he's my No. 1 guy as far as quotes go. Okay Dan, all right Dan, I've got it all ready. I just about quoted him again, right here.

Once again, good teams make for good conversations. And **Bob Smith's** teams over the past three years have been good at winning. Thus the head coach likes to talk. He's never at a loss for words and sometimes our conversations turn to strategy. Yeah, I don't run, but I know how to now, thanks to Smith.

Okay, even a sports story can have a tie for third. I'd have to say **Carol Diglio**, of the Novi

softball team, and Northville hockey coach **Brad O'Neill** spare no time expense to chat with me each week. Like above, success breeds loose lips, and these two always have plenty to say.

TOP TEAMS

With so many state champions to choose from, my selections may be biased based on my involvement with the teams. I thoroughly enjoyed making the trip to Battle Creek last spring to catch **Novi's wrestlers** at the state meet. That team finished runnerup in Division I, but faced nearly impossible odds against Davison.

Northville's football team won a pair of playoff football games recently, and sent me to my first-ever state quarterfinal game as a reporter. I rated this a bit higher because of the accommodations Hudsonville gave us reporters. What a working environment. And what a game.

No team could match the enthusiasm the

Novi cross country team had after its first state title back in 1998. For a program which had battle uphill in the state's toughest conference, the Wildcats looked like kids on Christmas morning. Led by Kevin Avenlus and Dan Christofferson, that team was truly special.

I was going to add a category telling of my most memorable moments here at the paper, but there are too many to choose from. There are too many people, events and things that have touched my life over the past three years for me to pull any three of them out for publication.

To all the coaches, parents and sports enthusiasts I have worked with over the years, I thank you. And to all my co-workers here in the Northville Record and Novi News' office, I wish you the best of luck.

Jason Schmitt is the sports editor for the Northville Record and the Novi News. He can be reached via e-mail at jschmitt@ht.homecom.net

Three Wildcats named All-Area

For the first time since 1994, the state's Division I/Class A champion didn't come from the KVC. But it was still the best conference in

Boys' Cross Country

Michigan, bar none. Novi, Milford and Lakeland all finished in the top 10. Novi was the runner-up to Rockford.

And here are the primary players in the KVC's dominance. Oh yeah, and a Northville kid. No, it only looks like an all-state team. It's HomeTown East's all-area boys' cross country team.

Chris Toloff Novi senior

Leaving no doubt that he's the best runner ever to cross a finish line in a Wildcat uniform, Toloff cruised to a runner-up finish at the state finals to medal for the third-consecutive year.

Toloff shattered course records at Kensington Metropark, Willis Park and at Lakeland High School, each time bettering the record in impressive fashion.

His time of 15:05 at MIS was among the top-five times ever in Division I (previously, Class A). He won the regional title, along with the league and Oakland County championships. He was also first at the Gabriel Richard and DCC Shamrock invites. Thus, his top 25 national ranking.

"He developed an awesome kick to go with his tremendous leg speed during the race," his coach, Bob Smith said. "He has become one of the most feared cross country athletes in the country."

The Novi senior co-captain was a part of two-straight state team titles (1998-99) as well as a runner-up finish this year. He finished 29th at the state meet as a sophomore before taking seventh last season.

He's signed a letter of intent to attend Michigan State University next fall.

Tim Moore Novi junior

Novi faced a lot of pressure to three-peat this season after two-straight team titles. Next season, Moore will have to deal with that pressure as an individual.

The junior placed third at the state finals for the second-consecutive year and was the only underclassmen to finish in the top 12 in the championship race. He should



South Lyon's Brian Lee

be the state's top-ranked runner next fall.

He made tremendous strides over the last few weeks of the season, continually closing the gap between him and the top two runners in the state, Dathan Ritzenhein and teammate Chris Toloff. Moore was second to Ritzenhein at the Footlocker Regional race in Kenosha, Wisconsin and will compete at the National race (top 32 runners in the country) this Saturday in Orlando.

Moore had a stellar regular season, finishing runner-up to Toloff at the regional, county, conference, Gabriel Richard and Shamrock meets. He broke 16 minutes at five big meets this past season, and his time of 15:58 was just three seconds off the former Kensington Metropark (Possum Hollow) record (15:55).

Like Toloff, he too is a three-time state medalist and was the third-ranked runner in the entire state.

"He has re-dedicated his training, he's very focused," Smith said. "He is also ranked among the top 25 nationally."

Mark Avenius Novi senior

His times improved drastically from last year, in which he was an all-state runner (17th). The reason?

He was healthy.

Avenius battled injuries as a junior, but reaped the rewards of good health this year. He was third at the Oakland County meet and fourth overall at the KVC, regional (15:52) and Gabriel Richard invitational. He took fifth at the Shamrock Invite. At the state meet, Avenius ran a 15:53 to take 22nd overall, his second-straight all-state performance.

Four times this year Avenius finished under 16 minutes.

"He's a big-meet runner for us," Smith said. "The bigger the meet the better he does. He understands running and training. Any other team would have Mark as their number one runner."

Nick Kopczyk Milford junior

When the dust settled, Kopczyk was the number two underclassman in the KVC, behind only Novi's Moore. This after a season which saw him make all-state — 14th in Division I — as the Redskins placed fifth at the MIS. Sure, there were some contenders for this mythical designation on his heels, like Pinckney's Greg Pope and Hartland's Scott Assenmacher, but Kopczyk kicked them to the side at the league meet, where he was sixth, and the regional, where he placed fifth. Kopczyk finished seventh at the Oakland County meet. He placed first in five of Milford's seven KVC dual meets.

With Kopczyk and most of his varsity compadres returning next fall, some are tabbing the Redskins as a state title contender in 2001.

Pat Klein Lakeland senior

Klein was the first runner in Lakeland's storied history to make all-state in three seasons. His final varsity race may have been his best, Klein was fourth at the state meet, setting a school record in the process — 15:15.8.

Early in the season Klein wasn't dominating, and some may have questioned the hype. They weren't with the program. He just got better every week.

"Klein is a tremendous competitor," Lakeland coach Randy Wilkins said. "He's got a lot of heart and always rises to the occasion."

2000 ALL-AREA BOYS' CROSS COUNTRY

First Team

Name	School	Grade
Chris Toloff	Novi	Senior
Tim Moore	Novi	Junior
Mark Avenius	Novi	Senior
Nick Kopczyk	Milford	Junior
Adam Kowalczyk	Milford	Senior
Pat Klein	Lakeland	Senior
Brian Theut	Lakeland	Junior
Brian Bilyk	Northville	Senior

Second Team

Name	School	Grade
Brian Lee	South Lyon	Junior
Pat Miller	Milford	Sophomore
Dan DeRusha	Milford	Freshman
Tim Kava	Novi	Sophomore
Eric Walle	Novi	Senior
Todd Foren	Novi	Senior
Mitch Erickson	Novi	Junior

Honorable mention

South Lyon - Andrew Lapham, Nick Pearce, Nate Pedersen

Milford - Tyler VanAcker, Dan Hurst, Casey Barnes

Novi - Eric Saurer, Dan Stevens, Steve Szwasz

Northville - Bill Dalton, Ben Flood, Clark Paciorek

Lakeland - C.J. Hadding, Chris Welch, Adam Craig

Those occasions came often, as Klein competed with the state's best. He was third at the KVC meet, fifth at the Oakland County meet, third at the Midland regional at the regional (where he ran his best time of the year up to that point — that whole big meet runner thing), fifth at the West Bloomfield Invitational, second at the Jackson Invitational and the winner of the Oxford Invitational.

Brian Theut Lakeland junior

Theut was a strong number two runner for the Eagles all season, and will have the burden of front runner next year. Judging from his resume to this point, Theut should be up to the task.

In his second-consecutive state finals appearance he placed 21st. Theut was an individual state qualifier as a sophomore and this season ran well enough at Michigan's toughest regional — eighth place — to have done so again, had circumstances warranted it.

Theut made first-team All-KVC thanks to his sixth-place finish at

conference meet. He cracked the top 10 at the Oakland County meet.

Brian Bilyk Northville senior

He led his team to its first-ever Western Lakes Activities Association championship this year, finishing fourth at the league meet in 17:03 at Kensington.

He was 56th overall at the state finals, finishing in a time of 16:17.

Stacked up against the Kensington Valley Conference's best, he finished seventh at the Midland regional. In all, he was a two-time all Western Lakes first teamer, all-division once and was an academic all-state selection twice.

Second Team

Brian Lee South Lyon junior

Last season Lee was South Lyon's third runner. A year later, he was the man. And he responded like a vet.

The Lions' best team perform-

ance of the season came at the Midland regional. And it was Lee on point. In a super-tough field, he placed 18th after running an outstanding five-minute opening mile. He ended up with the best time of his career, 16:32. That was a second-better than his 10th-place time at the Gabriel Richard Invitational. Lee was the individual winner of the Petoskey Invitational, as well.

Pat Miller Milford sophomore

Milford coach Brian Salyers said when teams line up against Miller, he doesn't exactly strike fear in their hearts. He doesn't look like the prototypical runner. Except on the time sheet.

"He just has a great work ethic and the ability to go out and race," Salyers said. "Now Pat's one of the top sophomores in the state."

He placed 11th at the state's most taxing regional, then was 39th overall at the Division I state meet. Miller was a second-team all-conference honoree following his ninth-place KVC finish. Miller was one of seven Redskins to medal at the Oakland County meet, where he finished seventh.

Dan DeRusha Milford freshman

A year ago, DeRusha was a middle school phenom. This fall, as a freshman, he proved he could run with the big boys. He was one of the pack early on, then became Milford's consistent third runner in the post-season. DeRusha made second-team All-KVC. Only teammate Nick Kopczyk stood between him and first-team all-league. Kopczyk was seventh at the KVC meet, DeRusha eighth. He was the only freshman to make either all-conference team. He then placed 15th at the regional, and then was third for Milford as the Redskins placed fifth at the state finals.

Tim Kava Novi sophomore

Novi's produced some great runners over the past three seasons, and Kava fits into that mold. He's on par to be mentioned among Novi's best, as was witnessed this season.

He finished 48th at the state meet after taking 10th at the Midland regional. Among four Novi runners vying for a spot on the state final roster, he won the junior

Continued on 2

Continued from 1

varsity league meet and would have finished among the top-20 in the varsity race with his time of 17:24.

"Like (Tim) Moore, he is also a big meet runner," his coach Bob Smith said. "He proved that at county, regional and states."

**Eric Walle
Novi senior**

If not for a heel injury early in the season, who knows what Walle could have accomplished his senior season. Walle was an all-state selection a year ago (22nd), but battled for a top-50 finish this season (49th).

His times improved drastically as he made his way back into the starting seven. He finished 21st at the league meet (17:31) and 19th at the Midland regional (16:35).

"Most athletes would have given up hope had they had the type of injury that Eric had," Smith said. "Instead, Eric kept his desire burning and fought his way back into the starting lineup. He has been giving back to the program all year long."

**Todd Foren
Novi junior**

Foren was a steady force for Novi the entire year, securing a starting spot on one of the state's best teams.

The junior stepped it up at the league meet, where he took second-team honors after placing 13th overall. He came back to finish 16th at the Midland regional a week later. He finished 86th at the state meet at MIS.

He'll be one of the keys to Novi's

success next season.

"Todd has the capability to be an all-stater next year," his coach said. "I believe he will take that next step with his training. He has already given me his word that he will triple his summer mileage. If he does, he will be running with (Tim) Moore next year in practices and meets."

**Mitch Erickson
Novi junior**

He competed at the state meet for the second-straight season, joining Tim Moore as the only Wildcat underclassmen to do so.

He ran well when it counted most, earning second-team all-KVC honors by finishing 14th overall (17:07). He was a regional medalist as well, crossing the line in the 13th position. Taking out just the KVC runners in that race, Erickson was 10th among those athletes, bettering his KVC finish by four positions.

"Mitch is a student of the sport. He will do everything possible to improve his performance running CC," Smith said. "He makes sacrifices on his diet, social life and other activities in order to run his absolute best."

THE WILDCAT ROAR

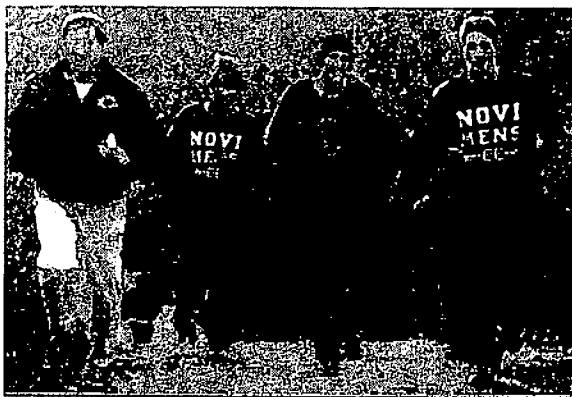
DECEMBER 13, 2000

Tim Moore takes second in regionals race

by Corey Reiter
Staff Writer

On November 25, Kenosha Wisconsin was the location of the 21st annual Midwest cross country regional's meet sponsored by Footlocker. Students from all over the Midwest conference gathered there to compete for the chance to qualify for the national race which is held in Orlando, Florida. This year's 3.1 mile race had 305 participants, and three of the runners were students from Novi High School: Eric Walle, 01, Mark Avenius, 01 and Tim Moore, 02.

There are four different regions which split up the country, the Midwest conference (which Michigan is a part of), is one of the most highly competitive conference in the country. To qualify for the regional race students have to run under a 16:20 time during a race any time in the season. At the end of the race Walle took 88th and Avenius took 164th neither runners qualify for the national competition. Although Tim



Alex Granzow/The Wildcat Roar
Moore takes a victory lap with Coach Smith, and teammates Eric Walle and Mark Avenius.

Moore a junior stepped up and ended up taking second in the race.

Moore was confident in his abilities but was cautious as well. "I knew there were going to be lots of good runners there and it was my first time at a regional race, so I did not know what to expect." stated Moore. Although Moore's confidence and physical abilities were top notch he was still beaten by a senior from Rockford Michigan named Dathan Ritzenhein.

In the Michigan state finals (Novi took second), Ritzenhein took first with a time of 14:10 while Moore who took third in the race with a time of 15:06. Moore was confident that Ritzenhein was the only person there who would keep him from first place. "Before the race, I realized I could not beat him so when I took second I knew I did the best I could do." With the National race only days away, Moore is training his

hardest in both mind and body to do the best that he can do. "I don't know what to expect, I'm not going to make any assumptions. A long time goal of mine this year is to run under fifteen minutes I think this national race is a good opportunity to do so".

The national race was held in Orlando Florida on December 9th. "This is where all my training and hard work will come together to pay off. I am going to do the best I can do," said Moore.

LOCAL / STATE

◆ Roundup

Ritzenhein wins cross country title

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. —

Dathan Ritzenhein, a senior at Rockford High School, on Saturday became only the second runner to win the Foot Locker Boys Cross Country Championships twice, nearly breaking the course record he set last year.

Ritzenhein finished the 3.1-mile event at Walt Disney World Resort in 14 minutes, 35 seconds — six seconds shy of his record mark in the 1999 race.

Alan Webb, a senior from Reston, Va., who has committed to attending the University of Michigan next fall, finished second with a time of 14:55.

Other Michigan students in the race included Timothy Moore of Novi, who finished eighth at 15:13, and Sean Moore of Saline, who finished 24th at 15:43.

Saline's Moore 24th in national meet

FROM NEWS AND WIRE REPORTS

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — Saline High School senior Sean Moore finished 24th out of 32 runners Saturday at the Foot Locker Cross Country Championships national meet.

Competing in 75-degree, humid weather, Moore ran a time of 15 minutes, 43 seconds.

The top 15 runners earned All-America honors.

"I wasn't disappointed," said Moore, who placed ninth at Michigan's Division I state meet this fall. "We went out pretty slow. It was a slow day pretty much for everyone. It was a good day. I ran the kind of the race I wanted to."

Moore said he covered his first mile in 4:47, which he

said is a slow time, and was part of a pack. He eventually fell behind the pack and remained in about 24th for the last third of the 3.1-mile (5,000-meter) race.

Dathan Ritzenhein, a Rockford High School senior, became only the second boy to win the meet twice. He finished the 3.1-mile event at Walt Disney World Resort in 14:35 — six seconds shy of his record mark in the 1999 race. Ritzenhein joins Abdirizak Mohamud of Boston, who won in 1996 and 1997, as the only other boy to win twice. Three girls have been two-time winners.

Alan Webb, a senior from Reston, Va., who has committed to attending the University of Michigan next fall, finished second with a time of 14:55.

The other state of Michigan runner was Timothy Moore of Novi, who was eighth in 15:13.

Will Tim Be Here next year?



THE NEW YORK TIMES SPORTS SATURDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2000

Y B

TRACK AND FIELD

'Big Three' Lead Resurgence in Distance Running

By MARC BLOOM

Distance running, which has been sagging badly in the United States for more than a decade, is getting a strong boost from three teenagers who train harder and think tougher than their predecessors.

American runners were shut out of the distance medals at the Sydney Olympics in September. But hopes for the future of distance running in the United States should brighten with the development of three high school seniors: Dathan Ritzenhein of Michigan, Alan Webb of Virginia and Ryan Hall of California. All three will compete today in the 22nd Foot Locker Cross-Country Championship at the Disney Sports Complex in Orlando, Fla.

The Big Three, as they are known, remind running enthusiasts of Jim Ryun, Marty Liquori and Alberto Salazar, who set high school records in the 1960's and 1970's before becoming world-class runners. What distinguishes Ritzenhein, Webb and Hall is their ability and their willingness to push to the limit in training, reversing a longstanding trend of caution in handling young talent.

"They've created a renaissance in America," said Joe Newton, the track and cross-country coach at York High School in Elmhurst, Ill. Last year Newton coached Don Sage, who helped promote a return to harder training nationwide.

Last year, after putting in 100 miles a week along with intense speed work, Sage ran the mile in 4 minutes 0.29 seconds. It was the fastest high school time since Liquori ran 3:59.8 at Essex Catholic High in Newark in 1967. Sage is now a freshman at Stanford.

Over the last two decades, high school distance times regressed. Newton, whose teams have won 21 state cross-country titles, blamed the trend on the adult

running-and-fitness movement, which promoted an "easy does it, run for fun" approach. Newton thinks this watered down training was adopted by high school coaches wary of burning out young runners.

"Even my own runners trained harder 30 years ago than in recent years," Newton said. "But now we're back to hard, rigorous, quality training."

A look at the grooming of Ritzenhein, Webb and Hall — all of whom will shoot for a sub-4-minute mile during the track season next spring — shows that they have been breaking new ground as Ryun did when he ran a 3:55.3 mile at 18. Soon after, Ryun set six world records.

Ritzenhein, the defending Foot Locker champion from Rockford High School outside Grand Rapids, Mich., won the Midwest Regional qualifier in the 5,000 meters (3.1 miles) in 14:35 on Nov. 25 in Kenosha, Wis. He broke his own course record by 20 seconds. He is undefeated, having won most of his races by over a minute.

A wiry, yet solid young man, at 5 feet 7 inches and 110 pounds, Ritzenhein recently ran 400 meters nine times at a practice; he ran each one progressively faster, with the last three in 55 to 57 seconds.

Ritzenhein, who plans to enroll at the University of Colorado, said he appreciated the extraordinary promise of the leading high school distance runners.

"It just takes a few good runners to get the ball rolling," Ritzenhein said. "When one athlete has a great race, the other wants to match it. With me and Webb and Hall, this is the greatest thing since the 60's."

Webb, an undefeated runner from South Lakes High School in Reston, Va., is headed for the University of Michigan. Two weeks ago, Webb won the South Regional, a 5,000-meter race in Charlotte, N.C., by 170 yards. In rainy weather, he ran it in 14:43, breaking his course

record by nine seconds. He was thought to lack Ritzenhein's stamina at longer distances, but his preparation this fall suggests otherwise.

Webb, who is muscular at 5-9 and 140 pounds — think Bill Rodgers with biceps — did the following workout recently, said his high school coach, Scott Raczko: a 4:30 mile, a 2:00 jog, a 4:25 mile, a 2:00 jog, a 4:21 mile, a 2:00 jog, two miles in 11:30, a mile in 4:13.

"There are a lot of collegiate runners who can't do that," Raczko said. "Before Alan, I never thought a high school kid could do it."

While Webb may be ready for a sub-4-minute mile now, he is still the underdog for today's race, Ron Warhurst, the Michigan men's cross-country coach, said. Warhurst compared Ritzenhein's bold racing style to that of Steve Prefontaine, who set 15 American records in the early 70's.

Hall, who attends Big Bear High School in Bear Lake, Calif., had hoped to contend for the Foot Locker title after running 1,500 meters in 3:45.12 last summer, the equivalent of a 4:02 mile. But he struggled in September when medication he took for acne apparently diminished his aerobic capacity. He placed fourth in the West Regional last Saturday in Walnut, Calif.

Now Hall is looking past the cross-country championship today to the spring track season, when he can pursue a sub-4-minute mile. Hall's training adviser, Irv Ray, who coached the American mile record-holder, Steve Scott, said that after seeing Hall's potential, he trained Hall as if he were a college runner. Hall has not yet decided where he will go to college.

"You need the courage to train a future worldbeater with greater intensity," Ray said. "If I didn't train Hall as a prospective 4-minute miler, we would never know how good he is."



Dathan Ritzenhein of Rockford High School Michigan, is the defending Foot Locker champion

Victor S

Moore places eighth in first national championship race

Sometimes it's easy to take for granted the accolades of the Novi cross country team and its individuals. Two state championships, a runnerup finish and nine all-state individual performances in the last three years makes it easy.

But Tim Moore added to that dynasty by finishing eighth at the Foot Locker National Cross Country Championships this past Saturday in Orlando, Fla. The meet is the pinnacle of cross-country running, pitting 32 of the best high school cross country athletes against each other. Footlocker is the major sponsor and flew each of the competitors down to Orlando for the weekend. It was Moore's first appearance at the

national final.

"I had no clue going in what was going to happen," Moore said. "I had some lofty goals to finish in the top 15 or maybe the top 10. I still don't think I can comprehend what happened."

His coach Bob Smith, who flew down to Florida along with Tim's mother and aunt, said Tim's preparation for the race was thought out carefully, trying not to disturb his usual routines.

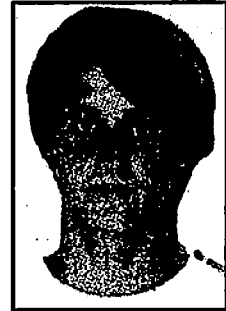
"Our plan was for Tim to develop his speed and stamina concurrently," Smith said. "It held him back from super fast times at the beginning; but I think it ultimately worked to perfection.

"We took the opportunity to do a workout that was familiar to him — getting his mind and body ready for a race just like we have done all year."

It seemed to work.

Moore finished less than a second out of 7th place in a time of 15:13.

Rockford's Dathan Ritzenhein, who beat out Moore and teammate



Tim Moore

Chris Toloff at the Michigan state finals, dominated the nationals for the second-straight year, winning in a time of 14:35. The meet consisted of eight runners from four different regionals. Moore finished second to Ritzenhein in the Midwest regional and he held his position, finishing second to Ritzenhein among Midwest runners in Orlando.

Traditionally, the runners from the Midwest fare well at nationals, but this was the year of the West. That region had five of the top nine runners and won the team competition with 30 points. The South was second with 48 points and the Midwest totaled 56. Northeast was fourth with 96 points.

"We would have been stronger," Moore said of his Midwest team. "But Chris (Toloff) was hurt and there was also a runner from Minnesota who couldn't run. He was really good."

Toloff strained a groin the week after the state final and couldn't run at the regional meet.

The atmosphere was like no other Moore had ever encountered in his running career. Thirty-two of the nations best runners competing in sunny Orlando in early December.

"I really didn't feel intimidated," he said. "I knew coming in how my times matched up against the other regions. I knew that if I ran my own race, I'd be up there."

Moore said he felt even more comfortable because there were fewer spectators than he saw at the Michigan state finals.

What should also make Moore feel good is that he was the top-finishing underclassman at the race, setting the stage for what could be a tremendous senior season next fall.

"I knew when I was a freshman that my goal was to win a state title, if I worked really hard," he said. "But I know there were a pack of three guys right behind me in this race that I know will be hungry next year."

The race was televised and will be shown on ESPN today (Dec. 14) at 1 p.m. and again this Sunday at 1:30 a.m.

Moore visits cross country nationals for first time

Boys cross country places 2nd at states

Winter 2000

Wrestlers win Regional title as Detroit Catholic Central had to forfeit due to 2 overweight ins and Novi beat Plymouth-Salem for the regional championship 56-15.

They placed second as team in Division I team finals they lost to Davison 41-28. most successful season in school history.

Senior **Dan Jilg** and Junior **Ryan Churella** each won a state title in Wrestling. Jilg defeated Ron Thompson of Plymouth Salem 4-2 in 199 pound match. Churella won 7-6 over Northville's Reggie Torrence at 130 pounds. 215 pound Nick Slovan won three matches before losing in the finals to Grand Ledge's Brian Cheyne 11-5. and Adam Borashko, 189, placed 6. Josh Churella became the second freshman in school history to place at states. He placed eighth at 103.

Pom Pon takes 2nd in Division I to Livonia Churchill. This was unusual for the team as they took two previous state titles.

Hockey shares KVC title with Milford in only second year on ice. They won a regional over Northville 3-1 then lost in quarterfinal to Okemos 3-2.

Gymnastics team places fourth at states.

Spring 2000

John Osborne leaves as Novi's only varsity football coach ever known. He taught health and phys. ed. at the High School. Osborne had been coaching for 37 years.

Current Novi football coach Tab Kellepourey said "Novi football to me is John Osborne. In five years, I hope people still associate Novi football with (him). He's such a high quality individual."

Boys Track senior **Harvey Steele** broke a 24 year old record in shot put at Novi Relays with a throw of 49 feet two inches. The old record was (48-11) set by Ben Gaylon in 1976.

Boys track wins regional title with a score of 89 points overall. Chris Toloff won 24 of the points on his own. Seven athletes qualified for state meet. Toloff was the regional champion in mile run. Yasuaki Goto broke school record in 100 meter dash with a time of 10.80 and Scottie Jettie vaulted a 12-10 and brought home the only other regional championship. Novi also wins KVC in boys track.

Novi Lacrosse standout **Pat Muston** was featured in Sports Illustrated in a feature called "Faces in the Crowd" for his 6 goals in a 12-7 win over Orchard Lake St. Mary's and 7 goals in the enormous win over Detroit Catholic Central.

Girls softball receives second straight KVC title. It's the teams first back to back championships in the school's history and only the second title in school history.

Three go to state in **girls track**. Mickie Rzepka won regional championship in pole vault with 10 feet flat, also a new school record, one previously held by her at 9.6. She finished fifth at states. Stephanie Pridmore won a regional title in shot put with a throw of 33 11 3/4. Christina Terrell finished second in discus with a throw of 102-5. Both didn't qualify out of preliminary flights.

Chris Toloff shatters two school records in track in the 1,600 at 4:10.77, which also is the third fastest time in Michigan High School history. In the 3,200 he ran a 9:15.30, which broke his own record enroute to a second and sixth place respectively.

Novi softball wins district title, 18-1 over South Lyon.

Baseball receives KVC title after beating Brighton 10-0, 13-2 in a double header. The team finished 16-2 overall. They win district title, 14-4 over Brighton, who has won seven years in a row previously. Win in semifinal over Pinckney precludes loss to DCC in final.

Boys track finishes third at states for first time.

Baseball standout A.J. Rowe was drafted as a 50th pick with the Milwaukee Brewers last spring. Rowe decided to attend college and wait to play for the pros.

Brendan Hadley .546 batting average vaulted his career mark to a scorching .540 giving him the MHSAA record for

career batting average. Jon Cervi's .504 career batting average placed him fourth in MHSAA and his 65 hits gave him a tie for 12th place in state record books.

Fall 2000

Boys cross country places 2nd at states as Rockford comes out on top for its first state title. Chris Toloff and Tim Moore place second and third overall. The team also wins third straight KVC title.

Tim Moore travels to first national race in Foot Locker Cross Country Championships.

Girls Cross Country, sophomore Margo Wolowiec, made her first trip to states and placed 193.

Football: Novi has to duke it out with Northville twice in three weeks. The last match, with controversy, ended Novi's hopes for a quarterfinal Division 2 appearance.

Girls swimmers take second in first ever KVC meet being edged out by Brighton.

Boys soccer earned a KVC title with a 13-1 record.

Boys golf gains KVC title but loses in regional match at the Pontiac Country Club.